This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

HIERONYMUS
ANDOVER-HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

TRACTS.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED

BY THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY

FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

SECOND SERIES.

VOL. IX.

CONTAINING

Mr. Hugh Farmer's Dissertation on Miracles; designed to shew that they are Arguments of a Divine Interposition, and absolute Proofs of the Mission and Doctrine of a Prophet.

London:

PRINTED BY C. STOWER, PATER NOSTER ROW.

1805.

S.C.R.
BX
9813
.T72
v.9

A DISSERTATION ON MIRACLES,

DESIGNED TO SHEW

THAT THEY ARE ARGUMENTS OF

A DIVINE INTERPOSITION,

AND

ABSOLUTE PROOFS OF

THE MISSION AND DOCTRINE OF A PROPHET.

Believe me for the very works sake. JOHN xiv. 11.

BY HUGH FARMER.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed by J. Taylor, Black-Horse-Court, Fleet-Street:

AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD;

AND W. VIDLER, 349, STRAND.

1804.

It is intended shortly to publish, in one volume, and in the same form, *The Essay on the Dæmoniacs of the New Testament*, and that on the *Temptation of Christ*, by the Rev. Hugh Farmer.

PREFACE.

THE Christian revelation well deserves the esteem of mankind on account of its intrinsic excellence: nevertheless, the proper proof of its divine original is that miraculous testimony which was borne to those who first published it to the world. But, unhappily for the interests of the Gospel, its most learned advocates have greatly impaired, if not destroyed, the force of this testimony, by asserting the power of invisible beings, of different and opposite characters, to work miracles.

This opinion (than which scarce any has been more generally inculcated) has occasioned much perplexity to many sincere Christians. When they survey the miracles of the Gospel, they can scarce help *feeling* the force of the argument arising from them in favour of its divinity: but when they recur to their speculative opinions concerning the power of evil spirits, their minds are in the same situation with that of the most learned of all the Jews *, when he confessed *a suspicion that all miracles may be wrought by the power of magic* or *incantation.*

* Maimonides, de Fund. Leg. c. viii. sect. 1. Compare the passage from Dr. Clarke, cited ch. ii. sect. vi. p. 82.

What has served to perplex the friends of revelation has emboldened others to reject it. From the earliest ages of Christianity, down to the present day, unbelievers have treated the argument from miracles (as it is commonly stated) not only as an improper means of conviction, but as an affront to their understandings. Celsus, (in a passage we shall have occasion to cite*,) not without an equal mixture of scorn and indignation, upbraids Christians with their absurdity, in making use of the same works to prove one person to be a divine messenger, and to disgrace another as a magician and impostor. And a celebrated writer, still living, when arguing against those who allow the devil a power of performing miracles, and who (according to his conception) after proving the doctrine by the miracle are reduced to prove the miracle by the doctrine, asks and resolves the following question: *Now, what is to be done in this case? There is but one step to be taken,—to recur to reason, and leave miracles to themselves: better indeed had it been never to have had recourse to them, nor to have perplexed good sense with such a number of subtle distinctions* †.

It may perhaps be said, "That could deists be

* Ch. ii. sect. vi. p. 80.

† *Rousseau*, in his Emilius, vol. iii. p. 113.

persuaded

persuaded of the *truth* of the Scripture miracles, they would not deny their *divinity*." But the same opinion concerning the miraculous power of wicked spirits, which furnishes them with an objection against the divinity of the miracles of Scripture, supplies them with their strongest argument against their truth. For they cannot persuade themselves that God, when he sees fit to give proofs of his own extraordinary interposition, will choose such as are deceitful or ambiguous. And whatever their own sentiments may be with respect to the power of evil beings to work miracles, yet as long as they are taught to believe that the Scripture ascribes to them this power, they will think themselves warranted by the Scripture itself to reject or disregard its miracles.

The more I reflect upon this subject, the more fully am I convinced, that it is entirely owing to *the natural impression* which miracles make upon the human mind, and not to those speculative opinions which have been most commonly entertained concerning them, that Christianity has maintained its ground in the world. And to these natural impressions we might safely trust the cause of revelation, were they not liable to be effaced by the power of superstition, and the sophistry of science falsely so called. In other instances, as well as in this, the natural sense of

mankind

mankind may be in some measure subdued by the force of opposite principles. And whenever this is the case, it becomes necessary to shew that those principles are ill founded.

What is attempted in the following sheets, is, to refute those principles of dæmonism, which have done so much discredit to the argument drawn from miracles in favour of the Jewish and Christian revelations. Without entering into an examination of the peculiar nature and circumstances of the Scripture miracles, I consider only *the general question*, Whether miracles are, in themselves, evidences of a divine interposition, and consequently (when properly applied) certain proofs of the divine original of a supernatural revelation? Nor is it merely the credit of revelation that is concerned in this question; but the honour also of the general administration of divine providence, and the common interests of piety and virtue. And one would imagine that all men would wish to see the affirmative of this question fully proved; for what can contribute more to our happiness, than the belief that the world is under the government of God alone; and that no created spirits, much less such as oppose his benevolent and wise designs, can disturb that course and order of things which he has established? With respect to the friends of revelation,

lation, there is this additional reason to dispose them in favour of this principle, that they must allow, that (at least) it facilitates the proof of revelation, and reduces it within a narrow compass; leaving them only the easy task of proving the truth of the miracles of the Gospel, in order to their fully establishing its divine original.

Notwithstanding many recommendations of this principle, I am sensible it must meet with opposition from the prejudices of mankind, which insensibly bias even upright inquirers after truth. Many are ready to acknowledge, that an opinion is not therefore false because it contradicts received notions; and yet but few are duly sensible, how exceeding difficult it is to get rid of false opinions early entertained, constantly inculcated, and stamped with the authority of those who are most respected for their learning and abilities. Habits have as great an influence over the judgments as over the actions of mankind.

The subject before us certainly deserves an impartial and attentive examination. And though the manner in which it is here handled may be liable to several objections, yet the author hopes for some indulgence from those who are acquainted with the difficulties with which the subject was embarrassed, and consider the compass necessary to be taken in treating it. One objection

tion it may be proper here to obviate, viz. "that by maintaining that miracles, if they are not works peculiar to God, form no conclusive proof of a divine revelation, I give an advantage to infidelity." To persons accustomed to follow truth wherever it leads, such language will seem rather to require a rebuke than to deserve an answer. It is not the language of probity, but of policy, which has ever discouraged all inquiries after truth, and still continues to stop its progress in the world. This language betrays an unworthy suspicion of the Christian revelation, which, nobly conscious of the validity of its credentials, demands a rigorous examination, and must in the end be a gainer by it. If the tenets advanced in the following sheets are false, it is fit they should be detected; and if they are true, we may embrace them with safety; because truth will be always found consistent with itself. It is not however the doctrine which we assert, that gives advantage to infidelity, but that which we oppose, viz. "the power of other beings besides God to work miracles, even in opposition to heaven." While this principle is maintained, and maintained upon the credit of those very Scriptures whose authority it subverts; unbelievers, if we may judge by the experience of near two thousand *years*, will always reject the evidence of miracles

as inconclusive. If they are to be convinced, it must be done, I apprehend, in the method here attempted, by shewing them that this principle is as contrary to the sense of revelation as it is to the genuine dictates of reason; and consequently that miracles, being appropriate to God, constitute a certain proof of a divine mission, and are the most proper means of confirming and propagating a new revelation.

I will only add, that it was never more necessary to do justice to revelation on this subject than in the present age, which is every day making such quick advances in the knowledge of nature. For hereby we are daily furnished with new proofs, that in the system of nature there is no combat of opposite powers; that all the parts of which that system is composed, though infinitely various, act by uniform laws, and conspire together in carrying on the same design; and consequently that they are under the constant direction of *One* almighty ruler. Will not the prejudices of unbelievers therefore be every day increasing, while men misrepresent revelation as teaching the contrary doctrine?

ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE Editor of this work flatters himself that the present edition will be found correctly printed from a copy of that impression which passed under the superintendance of the author in the year 1771.

To the great care and attention of the printer he is much indebted for that accuracy which he trusts will be found through the whole volume, and which in very heavy notes, with frequent quotations in several dead languages, is not easily attained.

Every page of the new edition has been compared with the old, and the proper references made in the table of contents, which, in fact, is a sort of index to the volume. A new index is now also added of all the passages of Scripture explained or referred to in the course of the work, which it is presumed will be found highly useful to the theological student.

Glocester Place,
Jan. 1, 1804.

J. J.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary Considerations, p. 1.

SECTION I.

THE nature of miracles explained, and shewn to consist in their contrariety to those general rules by which the visible world is governed; or to the common course of events in it, p. 2. This account cleared from objections, p. 3. Four conclusions from it, p. 11.

SECTION II.

Miracles not impossible to the power of God, p. 14. Nor necessarily repugnant to our ideas of his wisdom and immutability, p. 18. Neither do they imply any inconsistency in the divine conduct, or any defect or disturbance of the laws of nature, p. 21.

SECTION III.

Of the different causes to which miracles have been ascribed, p. 22. 1st. Miracles unjustly considered by some as the effects of the secret powers of nature, *ib.* Easily distinguished from the wonders both of nature and art, p. 26. 2dly. The opinion of those who ascribe miracles to superior created intelligences acting without a special commission from God, stated, p. 27. 3dly. An examination of the opinion of those who appropriate all real miracles to God, as works which are supposed to require the immediate exertion of divine omnipotence; while at the same time they allow superior spirits, both good and evil, a power of performing very great wonders, p. 28. and suppose

the devil counterfeits true miracles, and deceives the senses of mankind, p. 30.—What is here proposed, is, to prove that miracles can never be effected without a divine interposition, and are in themselves authentic evidences of a revelation from God, p. 31.

CHAPTER II.

Arguments from *Reason*, to prove that Miracles are never performed without a Divine Interposition, p. 33.

SECTION I.

The same arguments, which prove the existence of superior created intelligences, do much more strongly conclude against their acting out of their proper sphere, p. 34. 1. The argument from the gradation of being in our system, *ib.* 2. The argument from the perfections of God, and the magnificence of the universe, p. 38. The objection from the spiritual and invisible nature of superior beings answered, p. 39. A power of moving matter, not essential to all spirits, p. 40. As reason makes known to us only one almighty Being, who can certainly work miracles, it is most natural to refer these works to him, p. 43.

SECTION II.

No proper evidence of the truth of any miracles, but such as might have God for their author, p. 44. The supposition of the power of any created agents to work miracles in this lower world without a divine commission, contrary to our own personal observation and experience, p. 45. Nor does it appear that history has transmitted to us any miracles worthy of credit, but such as might fitly be ascribed to God, *ib.* Several general reasons for rejecting all miracles that could not have God for their author, p. 47. If superior beings never exert, it is unnatural

to suppose they possess, a miraculous power, p. 51. The objection, "that God may lay created spirits under a *general* but not under an *universal* restraint," considered, p. 52.

SECTION III.

The laws of nature being the immediate ordinance or operation of God, the rule of his government, and essential to the order and happiness of the world; it is impossible that God should delegate to any of his creatures a power of working miracles, by which those divine establishments may be superseded and controlled, p. 56.

SECTION IV.

The ascribing to any superior beings, besides God, and those immediately commissioned by him, the power of working miracles, destroys the evidence of the existence and providence of God, p. 61; is hurtful to true piety, p. 63; and a fruitful source of idolatry and superstition, p. 64. Christians too nearly resemble the Pagans, who deified the principle of evil, *ib.*

SECTION V.

If miracles were performed in favour of false doctrines, mankind would be exposed to frequent and unavoidable delusion, p. 67. Of the natural impression of miracles, when performed in attestation of a professed mission, p. 68. Whether miracles may accompany a false doctrine, *for the trial of mankind*, p. 112. Whether, in this case, the nature of the doctrine would universally secure mankind from deception, p. 73. What consequences might be expected to follow, from miracles wrought in support of idolatry, p. 74; or vice, p. 76. God will not subject mankind to necessary delusion, p. 77.

SECTION VI.

If miracles may be performed without a divine interposition, and in support of falsehood, they cannot be, in themselves, authentic credentials of a divine mission, and criterions of truth, p. 79.

Whether,

Whether, in case of a contest between two opposite parties working miracles for victory, the party that works *the most* and *greatest* miracles is espoused by God, p. 81. Whether, in case miracles prove only the interposition of some superior being, the *doctrine* will enable us to determine who that being is, p. 84. The proper and immediate intention of miracles could not be answered, if they did not appear to be divine works, previous to our examination of the doctrine they attest, p. 86. God must therefore have reserved to himself the power of miracles, p. 88. Recapitulation, *ib.*

CHAPTER III.

Arguments from *Revelation*, to prove that Miracles are, in themselves, certain Evidences of a Divine Interposition, p. 91.

SECTION I.

The view which the Scripture gives us of angels, both good and evil, and of the souls of departed men, inconsistent with their liberty of working miracles, p. 92.

I. Concerning angels in general, and good angels, *ib.*

II. Concerning fallen angels, and their state as described by St. Peter and St. Jude, p. 94. Their presidency over distinct regions of the world cannot be proved from what occurs Dan. x. 13, 20, concerning Gabriel's being opposed by the princes of the kingdom of Persia, and his fighting the prince of Persia, p. 96. Nor can their power of changing the constitution of the air be inferred from what is said by St. Paul concerning *the prince of the power of the air*, Ephes. ii. 2. p. 97.

III. Concerning the souls of departed men, p. 101. They have no intercourse with the material creation, at least not with this lower world, *ib.* The idea entertained of them by Christians, both in antient and modern times, borrowed from the Pagans, p. 103. The miracles ascribed to departed saints branded as impostures by St. Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2. p. 105.

SECT.

SECTION II.

The Scripture representation of the nature and claims of the Heathen gods considered, p. 106. The Heathens deified all the parts and powers of nature, *ib.* They believed the existence of dæmons, p. 109. The office of dæmons explained, p. 110. Dæmons the more immediate objects of Pagan worship, *ib.* An examination of the reasons commonly assigned to prove that dæmons were spirits of a higher origin than the human race, p. 111. The more immediate objects of Pagan worship were human souls, p. 115. This proved by the testimony of the Heathens, p. 116, of their historians, p. 117, their poets, p. 119, their philosophers, *ib.* and by uncontroverted facts, p. 122. Why the doctrine of Euhemerus was censured by the Heathens, p. 123. That the Heathens worshipped dead men, farther argued from the authority of the Old Testament writers, p. 124. The use of the word *dæmon* in the LXX translation, p. 125, in Philo and Josephus, p. 127, and in the New Testament, *ib.* Remarks on the late controversy concerning dæmons, p. 129. Dæmon used in a bad sense in Heathen writers, and in the New Testament, p. 130. The spirits of wicked men were thought to become wicked dæmons, p. 132. This proved from the testimony of Heathens, *ib.* and Jews, p. 133. The Christian Fathers maintain that all the Heathen gods had been men and women, p. 134. At the same time they affirm them to be dæmons, p. 135. Their inconsistency in representing the Heathen gods as dæmons of a celestial origin, p. 137. This notion borrowed from the Pagan philosophers, p. 139. Some of the Fathers taught that dæmons were the souls of departed men, p. 141, or that they sprung from angels and the daughters of men, p. 142. The sentiments of Tertullian and Origen concerning souls and dæmons, p. 143—5. The common people in the time of Chrysostom believed that human souls became dæmons, p. 146.

The

The Scripture condemns the worship of the objects of nature, p. 147, censures all the Heathen gods as utterly impotent and senseless, p. 148, and denies that they ever inspired prophecies, or wrought miracles, or could do either good or evil, p. 150. The system of Pagan idolatry was not supported by powerful wicked spirits, personating the Heathen gods, and, under their names, delivering prophecies, and working miracles, p. 152. The Scripture never represents the Heathens as worshipping devils, p. 157. The meaning of the several words rendered *devils*, of *schedim*, in Deut. xxxii. 17, and Ps. cvi. 37, p. 158, of *seirim*, in Levit. xvii. 7, and 2 Chron. xi. 15, p. 159, and of *dæmons* in the New Testament, p. 161.

SECTION III.

The character and pretensions of the magicians, diviners and sorcerers of antiquity examined, with the Scripture account of them; and the various pleas alleged by Christians, in support of the credit and efficacy of the antient magic, refuted, p. 162. The magicians undertook to foretel future events, and to effect many wonderful things, by their superior knowledge of the secret powers of nature, p. 163, yet were not mere naturalists and astrologers, p. 166. They are branded in Scripture as impostors, who were incapable of supporting their pretensions by any works or predictions beyond human power and skill, p. 171. The supernatural power of magic cannot be inferred, either from the Scripture's describing diviners by their usual appellations, or as persons having a *familiar spirit*, and *a spirit of divination*, p. 174, nor from the laws of Moses against divination and witchcraft, p. 177, nor from the credit in which these arts were said to be held, p. 180. Magic and divination held in general contempt in enlightened ages, *ib.*

SECTION IV.

Concerning the false prophets as spoken of in Scripture, p. 184, in which are explained, I. The celebrated warning of Moses,

If

If there arise amongst you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, &c. Deut. xiii. 1—5, *ib.* II. Christ's prophecy, *There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders*, Matt. xxiv. 24, p. 193. III. Several passages in the Epistles, relative to the false teachers in the apostolic age, whether they rejected or corrupted Christianity, p. 199. IV. St. Paul's prophecy concerning the man of sin, *whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders*, 2 Thess. ii. 9, p. 203. V. St. John's prediction concerning the person *who was to do great signs, and make fire come down from heaven*, Rev. xiii. 13, 14, p. 206. The predictions of false prophets not supernatural, p. 209.

SECTION V.

The Scriptures represent the one true God as the sole creator and sovereign of the world, p. 210, and as governing it by fixed laws, p. 213. They appropriate all miracles to God, p. 214, and urge them as proofs of his sole divinity, p. 216. The import of the word *Jehovah, ib.* The miracles of Moses designed to prove the God of Israel to be Jehovah, p. 219. The miracles of succeeding prophets performed with the same intention, p. 222. The controversy between the antient prophets of God and idolaters stated, p. 226.

SECTION VI.

The Scriptures uniformly represent all miracles as being in themselves an absolute demonstration of the divinity of the mission and doctrine of the prophet, at whose instance they were performed, and never direct us to regard their doctrines as a test of the miracles being the effect of a divine interposition, p. 230. The miracles of Moses and the antient prophets, p. 231. Those of Christ, p. 232, and his apostles, p. 242. Concerning the gifts bestowed upon the Christian converts, p. 247. An examination of the objection, from Matt. xii. 26, 27, *If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how*

then

then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? p. 248. The Pharisees did not ascribe Christ's miracles in general to the assistance of dæmons, p. 249. Nor did Christ refer them to his doctrine, in order to determine the divinity of his works, p. 251. The main doctrines of the Jewish and Christian revelations confirm the other proofs of God's being the author of miracles, p. 259.

CHAPTER IV.

Shewing that the Scriptures have not recorded any Instances of real Miracles performed by the Devil; in Answer to the Objections drawn from the Case of the Magicians in Egypt, from the Appearance of Samuel after his Decease to Saul, and from our Saviour's Temptations in the Wilderness, p. 261.

SECTION I.

The case of the magicians who opposed Moses considered, p. 262. The various accounts of this subject given by the learned, *ib.* The prevailing opinion since the time of St. Austin, that the works of the magicians were genuine miracles performed by the power of the devil, p. 263. It is proposed to shew that the magicians did not perform works really supernatural, nor were assisted by any superior beings, p. 264. With this view, the following points are examined at large; I. The character and pretensions of the magicians, *ib.* II. The true intention of Pharaoh in sending for them, and the absurdity of the intention commonly ascribed to him, p. 267. III. The motives which might induce the magicians to attempt an imitation of the works of Moses, p. 274. IV. The acts done by Moses, and the principles on which he acted, p. 276. His opinion of magic, *ib.* and of the Heathen deities, *ib.* his doctrine concerning Jehovah as sole Creator and Lord of the world, *ib.* the

the use he makes of his own miracles in general, p. 279: these several considerations rendered it impossible for him to admit that real miracles were performed by the magicians, least of all such as imply a creating power, *ib.* The plea, that Moses worked more and greater miracles than the magicians, insufficient to establish his credit, *ib.* The use he makes of each individual miracle apart, p. 281. The consequences which would follow from the order of time in which Moses and the magicians are supposed to have performed their respective miracles, p. 285. V. The language in which Moses describes the works of the magicians, p. 285. Three observations upon it, *ib.* VI. The nature of the several works done by the magicians, p. 291. Their first attempt, *ib.* Their second, p. 295. Their third, p. 296. Their fourth, p. 297. Why, in this last attempt, they could not produce a specious counterfeit of the work of Moses, *ib.* What they meant by saying, *This is the finger of God*, p. 299. The censure passed upon them by St. Paul, p. 301.

SECTION II.

The case of Samuel's appearance to Saul at Endor, p. 302. I. That the sorceress did not raise up Samuel, *ib.* II. Nor did she cause the devil to appear before Saul in the likeness of this prophet, p. 305. III. Whether the whole was the work of human imposture, the artful sorceress making the credulous monarch believe that she saw an apparition, when she really saw none; at the same time so managing her voice, as to make it to be heard from the place where she pretended the ghost was; and thus to cause Saul to think he received his answer from Samuel, p. 306. IV. Whether God did not either raise Samuel, or present a likeness or image of him before Saul, to denounce the divine judgment against him, for the crime he was at this time committing, in applying to a reputed sorceress, p. 311.

Concerning our Saviour's temptations in the wilderness, p. 323.

Allowances should be made for the errors of Christians, with respect to the devil's power of performing miracles, p. 324.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.

Shewing that Miracles, considered as divine Interpositions, are a certain Proof of the Divinity of the Mission and Doctrine of a Prophet. The Advantages and Necessity of this Proof, in confirming and propagating a new Revelation. Miracles useful in reviving and confirming the Principles of Natural Religion, p. 326.

Under what circumstances miracles prove the divinity of a prophet's mission and doctrine, *ib.* Two extremes to be guarded against: that of considering miracles as proofs only of power on the one hand, p. 329, and on the other, that of representing them as proofs of the universal and perpetual inspiration of the person who performs them, p. 330.

1. The proof from miracles of the divine commission and doctrine of a prophet, is in itself decisive and absolute, p. 335. 2. This proof is natural, and agreeable to the common sense of mankind in all ages, p. 337. 3. It is easy and compendious, p. 342. 4. Miracles are a powerful method of conviction, p. 343. 5. Yet not violent and compulsive, p. 344. 6. Miracles necessary to attest a divine commission, and to confirm and propagate a new revelation, such especially as contradicts men's prejudices and passions, p. 346. 7. Miracles serve to revive and confirm the principles of natural religion, and to recover men from the two opposite extremes of atheism and idolatry, p. 349. 8. The evidence of miracles, whether of power or knowledge, is the fittest to accompany a standing revelation; because it may be conveyed to distant ages and nations, p. 354. Conclusion.

A DIS-

A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

BEFORE we inquire whether miracles are the peculiar works of God, and *in themselves* proper evidences of a divine interposition, and consequently of a supernatural revelation, it will be necessary to prepare the way by several preliminary considerations. I shall begin with

SECTION I.

Explaining the nature of miracles.

THAT the visible world is governed by stated general rules, commonly called the laws of nature; or that there is an order of causes and effects established in every part of the system of nature, so far as it falls under our observation, is a point which none can controvert. Effects produced by the regular operation

of the laws of nature, or that are conformable to its established course, are called *natural.* Effects contrary to this settled constitution and course of things I esteem *miraculous.* Were the constant motion of the planets to be suspended, or a dead man to return to life, each of these would be a miracle, because repugnant to those general rules by which this world is governed at all other times.

All miracles presuppose an established system of nature, within the limits of which they operate, and with the order of which they disagree. The creation of the world at first, therefore, though an immediate effect of divine omnipotence, would not come under this denomination. It was different from, but not contrary to, that course of nature which had not hitherto taken place. And miracles may be said to disagree with, or to be contrary to, the general rules and order of the natural system, not only when they *change* the former qualities of any of the constituent parts of nature, (as when water, for example, is converted into wine;) or when they *control* their usual operation and effects, (as when fire, without losing its properties, does not burn combustible materials; or a river is divided in its course, the water still preserving its gravity;) but also when they *supersede* (as they always do) the usual operation of natural causes. For effects produced in the pre-established system of nature, without the assistance of natural causes, are manifest variations from, or contradictions to, the order and usual course of things in that system. That a man should be enabled to speak a new

language,

language, which he never learnt in a natural way, and that his body should be supported without food, are events evidently contrary to the ordinary course of things, and to that constitution of divine providence which renders mankind dependent upon their own study and application for the knowledge of languages, and upon food for sustenance. We do not affirm that miracles do universally and necessarily imply a proper *suspension* of the laws of the natural world, so as that they should cease to produce their usual effects: the human mind may receive new knowledge in a supernatural manner, without any suspension of its present powers. Nevertheless, the supernatural communication of new knowledge to the human mind is contrary to the general rules by which the human system is governed, or to that connexion which God has established between our acquisition of knowledge and the proper exercise of our rational faculties.

To this account of miracles it has been objected,

1*st*, "That miracles may be performed where there is no disagreement with any law of nature, nor any variation from its established course: because many things which exceed the power of man may be performed by superior beings." This objection has been illustrated and supported in the following manner: "*A spirit* may have a natural power of lifting up a stone from the earth: and therefore, if he does so, there is no law of nature contradicted, any more than when *a man* lifts it up. Were a man to walk upon the water, upheld by some *invisible power*, the law of gravitation would no more be violated or suspended

pended than if he was upheld by some *visible power.* What departure is there from the laws and constitution of the universe, when a disease is cured by a superior being, any more than when it is cured by the force of some powerful medicine; unless there be a law of nature or constitution of the universe forbidding the occasional interposition of superior beings in this lower world? a point which ought not to be taken for granted, and assumed into the definition of miracles."

In answer to this objection, we may observe, that it is built on a misapprehension of what I here intend by the laws of nature. For though the word *nature* may be sometimes used for the whole compass of existence, created and uncreated, (in which sense of the word no effect can ever be produced contrary to the laws of nature, that is, to the natural powers of all orders of existence;) yet this is not the most common acceptation of the word, nor that in which it is here used. Neither do I apply this term to the constitution of the universe, and comprehend under it the invisible worlds, and those superior beings that inhabit them. By the laws of nature I here mean those rules by which the visible world is statedly governed, or the ordinary course of events in it, as fixed and ascertained by observation and experience; and particularly the order of that system to which we belong*. Now, according to the usual course of events

* Thus, for example, that there is a force impressed upon all *bodies*, whereby they mutually attract or tend towards each other, according

events in this system, a stone which lies upon the ground will rest there till it is removed by some *corporeal force* superior to that by which it gravitates towards the earth: all bodies specifically heavier than water will sink in it, when no *bodily substance* interposes to prevent it: and the diseases of our animal frame will continue, till the constitution, either by its own efforts or by the assistance of material causes, returns to its original state. And therefore there is a real transgression of these several laws of matter and motion, when a stone is raised up in the air, or sup-

according to the quantity of matter they contain, and in a certain proportion to their distances: that every body perseveres in the same state, either of rest or uniform rectilinear motion, except so far as it is compelled to change that state by some foreign force: that the change of motion is ever proportioned to the moving force whereby it is effected, and in the direction of the right line wherein that force is impressed: and that the actions of two bodies on one another are always mutually equal, and directed contrary ways: these are laws of nature, or general rules observed by natural bodies in their actions on one another, and in all the changes which befall them in their natural state. It may be said that the general laws of nature denote only the *phænomena* or objects of nature. To me they seem to express somewhat more, viz. that the phænomena are connected together in a certain order, and succeed one another in an invariable train, according to some general rules fixed by divine wisdom. Nor does it appear that any part of the natural system (not even the smallest particle of matter, any more than the vast body of the sun or earth) is ever moved but according to these stated rules. The more nature is studied, and the better it is understood, the more reason have we to believe that its laws are strictly and inviolably observed.

ported

ported on the surface of the water*, without the application of any corporeal force; or when a disease is cured without the assistance of the springs and powers belonging to the human frame, or the application of any suitable medicine.

In affirming all miracles to be deviations from, or contradictions to, the laws and order established in all the parts of the creation which fall under human cognizance, it is not supposed, or taken for granted, that there is a law or constitution of the universe preventing the occasional interposition of all superior beings in this visible world for the purpose of working miracles. Whether there are *any*, and, if any, *what* other beings there are in the universe, who have a power of interposing for any such purpose, is left undetermined by our definition, and is the point which is to fall under future examination. All that our definition implies as a thing allowed is, that, as far as our observation reaches, there is an established disposition and course of things, or that certain causes uniformly produce certain effects, according to fixed laws or rules. Every contradiction to this constitution of the natural system, and the correspondent course of events in it, I call a miracle, by *whatever*

* If in this and the foregoing instance the law of gravitation be not suspended, but only overcome by the interposition of some spiritual agent; yet on this supposition a real miracle is performed; because the operation and effects of the law of gravitation are controlled in a manner repugnant to the general rules by which the natural world is governed.

spiritual

spiritual beings it is apprehended to be effected, whether created agents, or the creator himself.

Those who have opposed this notion of miracles have not attended to the obvious distinction between *the usual course of nature* in this visible world, and *the* (supposed) *natural powers of invisible agents:* and they will not allow that the former is changed, if the effect produced does not exceed the latter. But suppose an angel to be as able to carry a man through the air, as a man is to carry a child in his arms; nevertheless the former would be contrary, and the latter conformable, to those general laws or rules of motion observed by bodies in our system in their actions on one another. And if no effect can be said to be repugnant to the course of nature, unless when it surpasses the natural power of the agent; then, till the utmost power of the agent is known, it can never be determined whether the operation agrees with the course of nature or not. Nay, it would follow from this principle, that the course of nature can never be changed: for such a change cannot be effected but by an agent who has power equal to the work; and yet if the agent has power equal to the work, then the course of nature is not changed. On this principle, the course of nature cannot be changed by God himself, merely because he has a natural power of doing it. And yet who does not perceive, that his causing the sun to stand still for twenty-four hours, though it lies within the compass of his omnipotence, would be a variation from the order of nature, or the common course of events in the natural world?

2dly.

2dly. As some will not allow that *the order of nature is contradicted,* so others deny that *any miracle is performed,* unless the action exceeds the utmost capacities of the agent. Accordingly they maintain* that the same action may be or not be miraculous, according to the different abilities of the performer. Were *a man,* say they, to stop the course of the heavenly bodies, which is above the reach of all the powers of his nature, this would be a miraculous operation: but were *a superior being,* who had power equal to such a work, to suspend the motion of the heavenly bodies, this would be no miracle at all. But this opinion is liable to many of the same difficulties with the other. For, from hence will it not follow, that, while the agent is unknown, it will be impossible to determine whether the operation is or is not miraculous? and likewise that God himself can never work miracles, because he is naturally able to work them? Nay, as, according to the former opinion, no law of nature can ever be superseded or controlled, so, according to the latter, no miracle can ever be performed; it being impossible that any action should exceed the power of the real agent. Every effect must necessarily have an adequate cause. An effect, therefore, which is beyond the ability of the person who produces it seems rather an absurdity than a miracle.

Should it be alleged, "that what the man himself has no power of performing, he may do by the assistance of a superior being;" it would be easy to

* Dr. Chandler in particular, in his discourse Of the nature and use of miracles, p. 17, maintains this opinion.

reply,

reply, that this superior being is the only proper agent, the work being accomplished by his power alone. When we speak of a prophet as the *performer* of his miracles, nothing more is to be understood by this popular language, than that they *take place* agreeably to his declaration, and are designed as a testimony to his mission. He is not, in strictness of speech, the proper agent; the works are not done *by* him, but *for* him, by that invisible being who interposes in his behalf. If the works did not exceed his own ability, they could be no attestation to his character, nor proofs of the interposition of any superior being whatever. And the same works would be equally miraculous, were they to be performed for any other purpose than that of bearing testimony to a prophet, or even without his intervention. The resurrection of Christ, and that of those who came out of their graves at the same time, though accomplished *immediately by God*, were as real miracles as if they had been effected, as many others were, *at the voice* or *by the instrumentality of man*. When miracles are performed *at the instance or with the intervention of man*, this circumstance serves to point out *the relation* they bear to him, not to prove their being done by his *power*. The case mentioned above, and which is framed with a view to show that a miracle is an operation beyond the ability of the agent, seems very incapable of answering the purpose. To stop the course of the celestial bodies is said to be either supernatural or not, according as the agent wants or possesses power equal to the work. But how could

this (or any other) operation be performed by a power unequal to it? It could be deemed miraculous on no other account than its contrariety to the general course of nature. If it was performed at the prayer of a prophet, this would better serve the purpose of attesting his character, but would make no alteration in the nature of the work itself.

Most writers, in defining a miracle, seem to place it, not in *the effect produced*, but in the *cause*, or at least include the latter in their definition. A *miraculous effect*, like every *common appearance*, has its own proper specific nature, distinguishing it from all others of a different kind, separate from the consideration of its cause. And it is the operation or effect alone, which is affirmed to be contrary to that established order and disposition of things commonly called the course of nature: the real invisible agent by whom the effect is produced, though he acts out of his usual sphere, exerts only his natural powers. The contrariety or conformity of the event itself to those laws by which this world is governed in the course of God's general providence, is that alone which denominates and constitutes it a proper miracle, or not. In this light, at least, the subject appears to me; though, considering the many different views taken of it by our ablest writers, it becomes me to propose my sentiments upon it with a just deference to the judgment of others *.

From

* The greater part of our latest writers upon this subject define miracles, *effects unusual, above human power, and manifesting the interpo-*

From the account here given of miracles, as operations contrary to the course of nature, the following conclusions are fairly deducible:

1*st*. No event, however *unusual* or *strange*, however *wonderful* and *unaccountable*, can on these accounts alone be deemed miraculous, or contrary to

interposition of superior power. The following reasons prevented me from adopting this definition: 1. The term *unusual* does not distinguish real miracles from many things which are not miraculous, such as the *rare* and *uncommon* appearances and productions of nature. 2. Nor does the calling a miracle *an effect above human power* distinguish it from all other effects equally above human power, produced by superior beings when acting *within their usual sphere*, which for that reason cannot be miraculous. 3. As this definition comprehends many things which are not miraculous, and to which no persons apply the term; so it excludes many things which are allowed by all to be proper miracles. For there seems to be a difference between effects *above* human power, or which argue a higher degree of power, and effects which argue a power barely *different* from human, and in no manner superior to it. If a stone of a pound weight were suspended in the air by *an angel*, all would admit this to be a miracle. But does this argue a greater power than is exerted, when a stone of the same weight, or one 50 times heavier, is suspended by *a man?* To make a piece of iron to swim (a miracle ascribed to Elisha, 2 Kings vi. 6.) may not absolutely require more power than men exert every day in different methods, though it requires a power that *does not belong* to their nature. 4. According to this definition, beasts and birds may work miracles; for they do many things that are above the power of man. 5. This definition, instead of describing miracles by *the nature of the works themselves*, describes them by their *author*, and *the degree of power* supposed necessary to their performance. 6. Works which argue only a power more than human can be no absolute proofs of a divine interposition. 7. The last part of the definition, *manifesting the interposition of superior power*, is superfluous. It is only saying, Effects *above* human power must be produced by a power *above* it.

nature;

nature; since it may be only the less known or the less common effect of its established laws and order. Comets, eclipses, monstrous births, prodigies, the peculiar properties of particular bodies, and all the rare appearances of nature, however they may raise men's wonder, especially in the more ignorant ages of the world, are as regular effects of the laws of the natural world as any of those with which we are most familiar. Under certain circumstances the *monster* is nature's *genuine* issue; and in the same circumstances there would always be the same kind of production*. Where nature proceeds regularly in her course, without being subject to any adventitious influence, there no miracle is performed.

2dly. In order to determine whether any operation be truly miraculous, it is not necessary to inquire into the powers of superior created intelligences, and to show how far they do or do not extend. Such inquiries are wholly relative to the *cause* or *author* of miracles, and are of no use in settling their proper specific *nature*, as deviations from or contradictions to the ordinary course of things. They do, indeed, necessarily argue the interposition of some spiritual agent, who is equal to such works; but their nature is the same, whether that agent be God, or an angel, or an evil dæmon.

3dly. Before we can pronounce with certainty any effect to be a true miracle, it is necessary (and nothing more is necessary than) that the common course of

* Wollaston's Religion of Nature, p. 151, 7th edition, 8vo.

nature

nature be in some degree first understood. In all those cases in which we are *ignorant* of nature, it is impossible to determine what is or is not a deviation from it, or to distinguish between miracles and natural effects. Even a real miracle cannot be admitted as such, or carry any conviction to those who are not assured that the event is contradictory to the course of nature. On the other hand, in all cases in which the course of nature is *understood*, it will be easy to determine whether any particular event be contrary or conformable to it, that is, whether it be a real miracle*. Miracles therefore are not, what some represent them, appeals to our ignorance; they suppose some antecedent knowledge of nature; *without* which, it is owned, no proper judgment can be formed concerning them; though, *with* it, their reality may be so apparent as to prevent all dispute or hesitation. *Every sensible deviation from,* or *contradiction to, the known laws of nature must be an evident and incontestable miracle.*

4thly. Those who maintain that both miracles and the course of nature are equally the operation of the divine power, have not sufficient ground to assert, "that what *distinguishes* miracles from common events, is, that with regard to the former the influence of the divine power is obvious and sensible." For in both cases the influence (that is, the actual exertion or exercise) of the divine power is secret and invisible; and the evidence and effects of it may in both be alike sensible and obvious. Nor is it necessary that

* This subject is pursued farther, ch. i. sect. iii.

all

all miracles should answer this description, but such only as are designed for the conviction of mankind. The proper distinction, therefore, between the miraculous and ordinary effects of the divine power consists in this, that in the former case God acts according to general laws; in the latter, he departs from them.

SECTION II.

Miracles not impossible to the power of God, nor necessarily repugnant to our ideas of his wisdom and immutability. Neither do they imply any inconsistency in the divine conduct, or a defect or disturbance of the laws of nature.

It would at best be a point of useless speculation, to inquire what purposes might be served by miracles, if, from the general nature of all such works, there arises a full proof against their existence. And such proof would arise, in case they were, what some represent them, absurd and impossible.

But to deny the possibility of miracles, is to contradict a principle the most certain and evident of all the deductions of reason, allowed even by the adversaries of supernatural revelation; the being of a God. For, if there exists an all-perfect mind, who made and governs the world, his omnipotence is a cause adequate to these marvellous operations. Infinite power, though it does not extend to contradictions, performs with ease whatever is possible in its nature. And so far are miraculous works from being impossible,

ble, that they are similar to what we see actually effected in the common course of divine providence. I will endeavour to illustrate this by the following example: To cause water to be both water and wine at the same time, is a manifest absurdity and contradiction, and therefore cannot be the object of any power: but to turn water into wine, or to change one liquid into another specifically different, is certainly within the reach of divine omnipotence; inasmuch as there is nothing contradictory in the idea of such transformation, and we observe continual changes of a like kind in many parts of the creation. Thus, the moisture of the earth, by a common but admirable operation in the natural world, is converted into the juice of the grape, and numberless other juices, differing in kind from each other, according to the different nature of the plant or tree which imbibes it.

This observation might be extended farther, and applied to other instances. Revelation is itself a miracle; but wherefore should it be thought impossible with God? To his inspiration we owe our understandings, with all their powers; from him we derive the noble faculty of speech, by which we communicate our ideas to each other: and has the father of our spirits no access to them, no ability of imparting immediately and directly the knowledge of his will, and of affording sufficient evidence of his own extraordinary presence and operation? Is there any thing in this more inexplicable than in the common action of mind on body, or of body on mind? Will any assert that the almighty Author of our frame is unable

to repair the disorders of it? that he, who with such exquisite skill formed the seeing eye and the hearing ear, cannot restore sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf? or that it is impossible for *him* to raise the dead, who every year renews the face of nature, and revives the seed sown in the earth, and every day awakens mankind from the death of sleep to new life, in a manner as incomprehensible by us as the greatest miracle? He gave being to every living thing, to innumerable kinds of animals, and to a great diversity of rational creatures; continually does he call into existence ten thousand new individuals: and is a second gift of life more difficult than the first? The analogy between miracles and the common operations of God in the settled course of nature is a convincing demonstration of the possibility of the former.

Nothing can lead men to controvert a point so obvious as this, but their not considering that the course of nature, which denotes only the stated laws by which the world is governed, is certainly the voluntary appointment of God, if not the immediate operation of his power. For, if it be admitted that nature is the operation or constitution of God, it cannot be denied that the power exerted in producing natural may also produce preternatural effects; there being no other difference between them than this, that in the former case the operations are regular, uniform, constant; in the latter, occasional, uncommon, and out of the ordinary track of God's administration. Upon what grounds can it be concluded that God is limited to a settled course of acting, and to the present

sent laws of nature? Is he not a free agent? Did he not act without the intervention of natural causes, when he created the world at first, and settled the present constitution and course of things? It must solely depend on the will of the Deity, in what manner he shall exercise his own power; whether in continuing or controlling the course of nature, which is his own appointment; that is, whether he shall work miracles or not. Thus, for example, it is owing either to his original law, or immediate agency, that the planets move round a centre, and keep in their respective orbits: but the same omnipotent hand which guides them in their present course could easily arrest them, or give them a new direction. To deny this, is to deny that God is at liberty to act as he sees fit, that he has any power over his own creation, and laws which derive all their authority from his sovereign will. The possibility of miracles, therefore, cannot reasonably be disputed by those who believe the existence of the all-perfect Divinity, the great Author and Lord of nature. And this is a principle which ought to be admitted, before we engage in inquiries into the truth of any supposed discoveries of his will. For, if there be no God, it is obvious to all, there can be no divine revelation *.

* Miracles, indeed, which are the evidences of a supernatural revelation, may be useful to convince men of the existence and perfections of the true God. Nevertheless, we find St. Paul, with perfect propriety, first instructing idolaters in this fundamental point, before he opened to them the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. Acts xiv. 15. xvii. 22—31.

As miracles are not impossible to the *power* of God, so neither are they necessarily repugnant to our ideas of his *wisdom* and *immutability*. Frequent miraculous interpositions might, indeed, argue a defect in those general laws by which the world is governed; to the regular execution of which laws we owe our ideas of order and harmony, our rational expectations of success in all our undertakings, and our strongest convictions of wise counsel in the frame and government of the universe*. And consequently it must appear highly improbable, that variations from those laws should take place, unless upon some special and urgent occasions. Yet whoever reflects on the boundless extent and duration of the divine government will easily perceive, that nothing can be more absurd as well as arrogant, than for man, a creature whose faculties are so limited, and who is but of yesterday, to presume to determine, that no fit occasion for extraordinary interposals can ever occur in that administration, the plan of which transcends his comprehension. By what principles of reason can it be demonstrated, that he who reigns from eternity to eternity never formed any designs, except such as may be accomplished by the present establishment and structure of the universe? In the *natural* world new phænomena have been observed; new luminaries in the heavens have suddenly shone out, and as suddenly vanished. And notwithstanding the great apparent regularity with which the heavenly bodies perform

* This argument is further illustrated below, ch. ii. sect. iii.

their

their revolutions, yet those which belong to our system are subject to such disorders as may in a succession of ages require redress from the immediate hand of its creator*. And if the *natural* world may admit or demand extraordinary exertions of the divine power, much more may the *moral;* because more liable to *disorder,* and at the same time capable of the most divine *improvements.* May not God then interpose in an extraordinary manner, to attest a divine mission, and communicate some important instruction to his rational creatures, which they could not gather from the common operations of his providence; or to raise them to a sublimer pitch of piety and virtue than they could otherwise attain? If they are frail, and liable to fall into sin, and are, either as a check upon the exorbitance of passion, or on other accounts, wisely and justly subjected to all the miseries of a mortal state; may not the divine Being erect a new dispensation to reform them from wickedness, to redeem them from death, and to advance them to a nobler state of existence? Such occasional interpositions might be farther serviceable, by obviating the inconveniences of governing by fixed and general laws. For extraordinary interpositions of the divine

* "While comets move in very eccentric orbs in all manner of positions, blind fate could never make all the planets move one and the same way in orbs concentric; some inconsiderable *irregularities* excepted, which may have arisen from the mutual actions of comets and planets upon one another; and which will be apt to *increase* till this system wants a *reformation*." Sir *Isaac Newton's* Optics, p. 378, 4th edition.

omni-

omnipotence in controlling the course of nature, besides answering the ends to which they are more immediately directed, are well adapted to banish from the world the notions of necessity and fate (which owe their rise to the uniformity and established order of the divine administration); to awaken intelligent beings to a sense of their duty and dependence; and to give them a new conviction and a deeper impression of God's governing power and justice. And if in such instances, and for such valuable purposes as these (and there may be many others of a similar kind far beyond the reach of our faculties), the Deity should diversify his operations; would not such operations display rather than obscure his wisdom, benevolence, and other attributes? It would be difficult to prove that God may not, in certain circumstances, have *greater reasons* for varying from his stated rules of acting than for adhering to them. And whenever this is the case, and the end proposed is proportionable to the means of accomplishing it, the miracles are *worthy* of a divine interposition.

With regard to the *immutability* of God in particular, that cannot be reproached or impeached on account of occasional interpositions; since they might be designed from the beginning, upon the foresight of a just occasion for them, and, instead of arguing any change in the Almighty, be only the execution, at the fore-appointed season, of his eternal and immutable councils. Nor is it by pursuing invariably the same methods of providence, but by constantly adapting them to every different occasion, that God displays

displays his unalterable and impartial rectitude. It will not therefore follow from the supposition of God's miraculously interposing his power in some circumstances, that he must necessarily do it in all others, however different; because in the one case they may be expedient or necessary to answer the wise designs of providence, and not so in the other.

Nor do miracles imply any inconsistency in the divine conduct, or any defect or disturbance of the laws of nature. When the Deity occasionally controls or supersedes them, he does not hereby contradict or defeat his intention in their first establishment: he proposes a design different from it, but not inconsistent with it. The laws of nature, being the laws of God, are certainly perfect, that is, perfectly adapted to answer all the uses for which they are designed: but miracles derogate not from this perfection; because they aim at an end which the laws of nature were not intended to answer, and indeed could not possibly answer, the marking a special divine interposition, and authorizing the mission of him at whose instance they are performed. Nor do occasional interpositions of the divine power disturb the order of nature in the common course of things. The operation of nature may be controlled in particular instances, without affecting the general system—not to plead, that some miracles seem only to supersede the operation of natural causes, without controlling it; or to produce new effects without the assistance of nature, but without interrupting it in its usual course.

There

There is nothing then in the general idea of miracles, considered as variations from the common course of nature, to furnish a certain universal proof against their existence; and there is a power superior to nature, who is ever able, and who in certain circumstances may see ample reason, to over-rule what he at first established.

SECTION III.

Of the different causes to which miracles have been ascribed. The point undertaken to be proved, is, that miracles are never effected without a divnie interposition.

As some have asserted the impossibility of miracles, even to the power of God; others, on the contrary, have represented them as works which may be performed without any difficulty, either by a skilful application of the secret powers of nature, or by the assistance of invisible beings, who may be at liberty to produce such effects without the immediate order of the Lord of nature; while there are some who, allowing their possibility, yet consider them as performable by God alone, or as the works of infinite power.

1*st*. That miracles are not the effects of the hidden properties of matter, the laws of motion, and the art of man; or, in other words, that they are not owing to a superior knowledge and skilful application of the secret powers of nature, a few words will be sufficient to evince. I readily grant, what some so earnestly contend for, viz. "that we are not acquainted

acquainted with all the powers of nature; that many strange properties of matter are now discovered, which were not formerly known; and therefore that there may be others equally surprising, yet undiscovered; that some persons, having a greater knowledge of these properties than others, may, by a dexterous application of natural causes only, perform such things as would amaze ignorant spectators, and be by them too hastily mistaken for real miracles; and that, since we cannot universally determine the bounds of another's knowledge, it is impossible to ascertain the limits of that power which in some degree increases with his knowledge." All this may be safely admitted; for, whatever men may be able to do *with* the assistance of natural causes, it is certain that they can do nothing *without* that assistance; and consequently cannot work miracles, which supersede the operation of natural causes*. Besides, though we do not know *all* the laws of nature, yet we are acquainted with *many* of them. It has been observed already†, that in order to determine what operations are miraculous, an antecedent knowledge of nature is requisite. And it is a just inference from hence, nor are we under any concern to deny it, that, inasmuch as our knowledge of nature is *partial*, and we cannot universally determine how far its powers may extend, it may be equally impossible for us to determine universally what operations are miraculous. But, on the other hand, our ignorance of nature is not *total*;

* Sect. i. p. 2. † Sect. i. p. 12.

the

the common course of it is in very many instances perfectly understood by all, by the illiterate as well as by the philosopher; their own observation and experience imparting to them very clear and satisfactory instruction concerning it; such as is most fully confirmed by the observation and united testimony of others, in the several ages of the world. In this knowledge of the laws of nature, all our reasonings, both in the sciences and in the conduct of human life, and all our ideas, are founded. Constant never-failing experience farther instructs mankind in the uniformity and constancy of the laws of nature; it informs us, that although men may discover new properties of matter, and find that natural causes under a skilful direction are capable of producing very wonderful effects; yet that they cannot subvert, control, or suspend any of the established laws of nature*. No change in these fixed rules of the divine

* Mr. Rousseau, who has lately revived the objection to miracles we are here considering, affirms, " that it might be in the power of one unknown law in certain cases to change the effects of such as were known." But what reason can this celebrated writer assign in support of this assertion? Is it agreeable to our ideas of the divine wisdom, to suppose that there is a perfect contradiction between the different parts of the same system? that, for example, the operation of the known laws which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies may be defeated hereafter by some other law yet unknown? Do the new discoveries which are daily making in the history and operations of nature give any ground for such a suspicion? And even supposing that, by the discovery of some law yet unknown, the effects of those already known might be defeated; this could not affect the credit of evident miracles, works seen and known

vine government can be effected by human power; notwithstanding, in certain other respects, human power may increase in proportion to our knowledge. From hence it will follow, that miracles, which are effects repugnant to the settled laws and course of nature, cannot possibly be produced by natural causes, though under the most skilful direction; nor be otherwise accounted for than by allowing the interposition of some being superior to nature, and capable of controlling its established order. And in all cases in which the laws established in the natural world are understood, and the effects produced are contradictory to them, we may conclude that those effects are su-

known to supersede the operation of all natural causes, and performed without their instrumentality. Were we to allow Mr. Rousseau, that, by a farther acquaintance with the powers of nature, men may hereafter be able to raise the dead, it would still be a real and evident miracle to raise the dead without the use and assistance of those powers of nature. It has been said, "that what, in one age, has been deemed a miracle, has been found in another, more enlightened by philosophy, to be produced by the powers of nature." This is not true with respect to the miracles of Scripture. There is not one fact there represented as miraculous, which does not still appear to be such, notwithstanding all our improvements in natural knowledge. And how will the adversaries of revelation account for this fact? The Greek and Roman historians relate as prodigies many events now known to be perfectly natural, while the writers of the Old and New Testament, who relate a greater number and variety of miracles, have not mentioned one but what appears to surpass the powers of nature now, as much as it did formerly. I only add, that if the Scripture miracles are easily distinguished from natural events, it is of no moment to inquire, how far ignorance or inconsideration may lead men in other cases to mistake the wonders of nature for real miracles.

 pernatural.

pernatural. In such cases, the knowledge of the miracle is as easy and certain as that of the laws. To heal all sorts of diseases, even the most inveterate, in an instant, and without the use of natural remedies; to perform these cures in numberless instances, without ever failing in any one, and upon persons absent as well as present; all men must acknowledge that these things far surpass the bounds of human power. An uniform unvaried experience convinces us that they do not happen according to the settled constitution of nature, and that a bare volition of the human mind cannot in any degree contribute towards their accomplishment. Nor indeed did any man, in any age or country of the world, ever lay claim to a natural and inherent power of performing them.

Real and incontestable miracles are easily distinguished from the artifices of imposture, and from curious experiments in natural philosophy; which, however unaccountable they may appear to the ignorant, can never be pronounced by them to be miraculous, because they do not know them to be deviations from the course of nature. Nay, from the visible natural means used in producing them, they have just reason to believe that they are the effects of the powers of nature. For these reasons, the motions of a crucifix, the pretended liquefaction of blood, cures gradually effected in the use of natural remedies, b ascribed to the intercession of saints, and the like juggles of popery, ought not to pass for miracles, even with those who cannot detect their imposture: nor should the skill of an Archimedes in raising an immense

immense weight, with the assistance of a machine which himself alone understood, be judged supernatural, how surprising soever the effects of it might appear to one ignorant in mechanics: in this last case, the visible application of mechanical powers; and in the former, the strong suspicion of fraud arising from the circumstances of the facts, and the covered manner of performing them; and in both cases an absolute ignorance, at least, whether the effects might not be produced by natural causes, should prevent any from pronouncing them miraculous: a sentence which should be always founded on such a clear knowledge of nature, as enables us to determine with certainty, that the effect in question is a contradiction to its established course.

II. There are many who admit that real miracles exceed the utmost power of natural causes and of mankind, who nevertheless do not ascribe them to God as their author.

"There are or may be in the universe," it is alleged, "invisible agents, placed in a higher order than men, and endowed with superior abilities, such as are equal to the greatest wonders; and God may not see fit to restrain them from exercising those abilities. Miracles therefore are proofs only of the interposition of some superior beings, not of God more than any other." In this manner unbelievers argue, in order to discredit the evidence of the Jewish and Christian revelations. "Were we to allow," say they, "the reality of the miracles to which those reve-

revelations appeal, this alone would not establish their divine original; because the works might be performed by other powers lower than the divine." Nor is this the language only of the avowed adversaries of all supernatural revelation, but even of very many of its sincere and zealous advocates, not excepting those most distinguished by their learning and abilities, whose high reputation is sufficient to procure a general deference to all their opinions. Dr. Clarke* in particular affirms, "that it is by no means possible for us to determine what degrees of power God may reasonably be supposed to have communicated to created beings, to subordinate intelligences, to *good* or *evil* angels." And "that (unless we knew the limit of *communicable* and *incommunicable* power) we can hardly affirm with any certainty, that any particular effect, how great or miraculous soever it may seem to us, is beyond the power of all created beings in the universe to have produced." Without any desire to detract from the just merit of those great writers who assert the power of superior beings, both good and evil, to work miracles, we shall freely and candidly examine the doctrine they advance; than which none appears to me more groundless, or more dangerous. But before we enter on this examination it will be proper to observe,

III. That those advocates of the Christian revelation who reject this account of miracles, have gene-

*Vol. ii. p. 697, folio edition.

rally

tally embraced another as hard to be maintained. They allow that spirits, both *good* and *evil*, by "the greater extent of their intellectual abilities, may discover to men a great many *secrets;* and that their subtlety, agility, invisibility, and mighty force, may enable them to do most *astonishing things*, and enable them also to assist men in performing many *great and marvellous works*, such as are far beyond the reach of human capacities: while at the same time they maintain that a *real miracle* cannot be performed by any power which is not strictly *infinite*, or otherwise than by the immediate exertion of *divine omnipotence.*"

Though this scheme be designed to save the credit of real miracles, yet it can never answer this end, till the abettors of it enable us to distinguish between the great and marvellous works which created spirits may perform, and those which are peculiar to the Almighty. What purpose can it serve to call them by different *names*, while we are left in ignorance concerning their respective specific *natures*, and are liable to mistake the one for the other? When the learned bishop Fleetwood allows "that spirits may perform most *strange and astonishing things, may convey men through the air, or throw a mountain two miles at a cast;* because their natural powers may suffice for such purposes*:" in what, besides words, does he differ from those who allow them the ability of per-

* See p. 99, 100, 108, 109, 113, 114, of his most ingenious *Essay upon Miracles*; to which the public is indebted for many excellent reflections upon this subject; notwithstanding the dangerous concessions which he has here made to his adversaries.

forming

forming real miracles? If he will not call any effect a true miracle, which might be produced by the natural powers of created intelligences, we can never determine what is truly miraculous, without first knowing the extent of the abilities of all created agents *. If they can remove a mountain, who shall say that they cannot remove the earth from its orbit? And if they can go so far, why may they not remove the sun from its centre? It can never be affirmed concerning this (nor perhaps concerning any other) miraculous effect, that it necessarily argues the highest possible degrees, or a strict *infinity* of power, such as cannot be exceeded. Much less can it be proved, that no invisible power which is not infinite could support a human body on the water, or raise it into the air; which nevertheless are real and evident miracles, because contrary to the known and usual course of nature.

"But *evil spirits*," it is said, "have not only the power of working the like wonders which *good spirits* do, but also another which *good spirits* will never make use of; that is, by delusion and deceit to imitate those true miracles which none but God himself can really effect." "The devil," it is said, "can deceive the senses of mankind, or place false appearances before them, so as to make them believe such works are really performed as exceed the power of all created agents." Those who hold this language do not duly consider, that such a deception of the human senses would be itself a miracle; a miracle multiplied

* Contrary to what is proved, sect. i. p. 12.

according

according to the number and different organs of the spectators; and which must have the same effect upon them, as if the work, however miraculous, was truly and really performed. For how could they distinguish, when an outward miracle is performed, and when it is that their own sight only is altered? Could they forbear doubting equally concerning all miracles, nay, concerning all the objects of sense, if they once firmly believed that their senses, the only judges of them, were liable to be thus deceived? If the delusion of Satan consists, not in affecting the organs of sight, but in placing false appearances before them, such as are perfect imitations of divine miracles; this is liable to the very same objections as the former. To be able to make things appear what they are not, and to impose upon the spectators beyond their capacity of detecting the cheat, would be equivalent to a power of performing the greatest miracles.

It will now, perhaps, be inquired, "If miracles are neither the effects of natural causes, nor of superior created intelligences acting from themselves alone; and if it cannot be proved that they do universally and necessarily require the exertion of infinite power, to what cause are they to be ascribed?" I answer, They are always to be ascribed to *a divine interposition:* by which I mean, that they are never wrought but either immediately by God himself, or by such other beings as he commissions and empowers to perform them. Miracles may not require a degree of power absolutely *incommunicable* to any created agent; and yet God

may

may never *actually communicate* a miraculous power to any creature, or do it only where he directly authorizes its use. Now, whether God works the miracles himself alone, or whether he enables and commissions others to work them, there is equally a divine interposition. And in either case every purpose of religion will be secured: for whatever God authorizes and empowers another to do, is, in effect, done by God, and is as manifestly a declaration of his will as what he does immediately himself. He can no more authorize another to act, than he can himself act, in opposition to his own nature, or in confirmation of imposture.

The point then which I shall undertake to establish is this, "that miracles are the peculiar works of God, or such as can never be effected without *a divine interposition*," in the sense of the phrase already explained. This point we shall endeavour to establish both by reason and revelation. And should we succeed in this attempt, there will then be no difficulty in shewing that miracles are in themselves certain proofs of the divinity of the mission and doctrine of the performer, and the most effectual methods of recommending him to the regard of mankind.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER II.

Arguments from REASON, *to prove that Miracles are never effected without a divine Interposition.*

MIRACLES, considered as means of conviction, or as proofs of an extraordinary divine revelation, pre-suppose an ability of judging whether God be the author of them, and they can be fitly regarded as his immediate declaration and testimony in favour of their performer. The appeal in this case is plainly made to *natural reason;* which must first be satisfied with the *evidence* of any supernatural revelation, before we acknowledge its *authority*, or submit to any of its *decisions*. And therefore, before we examine the sense of the Jewish and Christian revelations, with regard to the author of miracles, we will consider what may be advanced from REASON, to prove that they can never be performed without the immediate interposition of God.

We shall begin with examining the idea which reason teaches us to form of superior created intelligences; and in the next place endeavour to shew, that the supposition of their power to work miracles is contrary to fact and experience; and, lastly, point out some of the numerous absurdities which would follow from their possessing a miraculous power.

SECTION I.

The same arguments which prove the existence of superior created intelligences do much more strongly conclude against their acting out of their proper sphere. The objection from their spiritual and invisible nature answered.

We are far from denying that there are in the universe beings of a higher order than mankind, such as surpass us far both in natural and moral excellencies. All that we here undertake to shew is, that reason is so far from clearly informing us of the power of any superior beings, besides God, to work miracles, that the best arguments it can employ, to prove the existence of creatures of a higher order than man, do much more strongly prove that they can act only within a certain limited sphere. Those arguments are chiefly the two following:

1*st*. From the *diversity* of creatures, and the *gradual ascent* from the lowest to the highest order of existence, observable here on earth, it has been inferred, that the scale of beings is continued upwards above man, and that there are numberless species of creatures superior to him, as we know there are of such as are inferior to him. "Is it not very unlikely," we are asked, "that the gradation of being should stop just at man, the lowest order of reasonable creatures? Is the immense space between man and the Deity quite empty, at the same time that there is not the least chasm between man and nothing?" In answer to this reasoning*, I observe,

First,

* *It is* hardly necessary to take notice of the great impropriety there

First, That it has not, perhaps, all that force in it which its having been uncontroverted might lead us to suppose. We may allow, indeed, that the *infinite number* of living beings with which the earth is stocked, affords ground to conclude, that the other regions of the universe are equally furnished with inhabitants adapted to their respective situations. We may allow further, that the *gradation* of being from lower to higher, which we observe in *our* system, furnishes a proof, that the like gradation obtains in *other* systems, and that their inhabitants differ from one another in degrees of excellence, and rise one above another in beautiful order. But whether they rise *above us* in perfection, the argument from analogy alone, as I apprehend, cannot determine. For that only enables us to judge, by God's manner of acting in one case, how he will act in another; and of what we do not see and know of his ways, by what we do. But all that we observe in the system to which we belong is an innumerable variety, and a gradation of beings. By the rule of analogy therefore some similar economy may take place in other systems, and they may contain numberless orders of creatures rising one above another till we come to the highest of them *. Beyond this the argument from analogy

there would be in supposing that the chasm between man and his maker can possibly be filled up. Were the chain of intelligence continued upwards from man, through as many orders of created beings as you can imagine, yet the uppermost link of this chain would be at an infinite distance from the throne of God.

* This may likewise serve as an answer to another objection.

From

logy will not carry us, supposing it to carry us so far *.

Secondly. Let us however suppose that the scale of beings in our planet is a conclusive proof, not only of a like gradation of being elsewhere, but also of there being in the universe creatures as much superior to man as man is to the meanest reptile: still the same kind of reasoning which proves there are such beings, proves at the same time that they have a certain limited sphere of action appointed them by God. For, how various soever the powers of different spe-

From the close *connexion* between the different orders of beings in our system, and *their mutual dependence*, it has been inferred by some, that we may be equally related to and dependent upon the inhabitants of some other system. All that the argument from analogy proves, is, that in each system of the universe the different orders of creatures are or may be dependent on each other; but it does not prove that the inhabitants of one system have a dependence on those of another: for of this we have no example. Besides, if the argument from analogy proved a *mutual* dependence between the inhabitants of different systems, it would conclude as strongly in favour of the dependence of the inhabitants of other systems upon us, as of our dependence upon them. There may be a relation between all those numberless worlds, and systems of worlds, of which the universe is composed, as between various parts of one stupendous whole; but the point that still wants to be proved, is, that the inhabitants of other systems and worlds have more power over us than we have over them.

* Those who have so often made use of the argument from analogy on the point in question, will perhaps have a less opinion of its force, if they consider farther, that in another view it militates against their own principles: for, were this argument conclusive, it would prove, that inasmuch as our system is inhabited by *corporeal* intelligent creatures, other systems are so likewise; and thus lead *them to deny a world of spirits.*

cies

cies of creatures here on earth may be, they are all under particular laws, and have bounds circumscribed to their activity, which they are not able to transgress. The rule of analogy teaches us to conclude the same concerning all other beings. If we may judge of the conduct of Providence in unknown instances, by those which fall under our observation, HE *who has set bounds to the sea, which it cannot pass, and says to its proud waves, Hitherto shall ye come, but no farther**, has bounded the power and fixed the state of all the creatures which he hath made, not excepting those of the noblest order. And therefore whatever their natural powers may be, and however freely they may be allowed to use them, they are limited and determined to such purposes as God has appointed, and cannot possibly be extended beyond the sphere assigned them by the Creator. And yet no sooner is it proved, (or thought to be so) that probably there are, in *some* portion of the universe, beings superior to man, than it seems to be taken for granted, that they have the liberty of an unbounded range over the whole creation, that their influence extends over this earthly globe in particular, and that they stand in the same relation to man, as man himself does to inferior creatures. But though there be a strict connexion between the different orders of creatures on this earth, who all belong to the same system, yet none of them have any possible communication from this lower world with the inhabitants of different systems; none of them are able to traverse the universe, or to pass

* Job xxxviii. 11. Jerem. v. 22.

the

the bounds of their proper dwelling. And this must be the case in other systems, supposing them to be regulated by the same laws which take place in our own. Their inhabitants may have larger capacities than mankind, and a wider province assigned them; and yet have no more power over us, than we have over them; they may have no communication with us, nor any influence beyond the limits of their own globe.

2dly. If we wave the argument from what is called the scale of being, and appeal to the unbounded power and goodness of God, or to the astonishing magnificence of the universe, in proof of the existence of creatures of a higher order than man; still these arguments, however conclusive, will not prove that they are not under the continual government and control of God, or that they have not all their proper department. For, not to allege that the power and goodness of God, though strictly infinite, and though they have (without doubt) displayed themselves in the production of more noble orders of beings than mankind, are not, however, exerted to the utmost in every, or in *any*, single effect; it is certain they are never exercised but under the direction of unerring wisdom, by which all things are framed in the most exact proportions: and as to the universe, it is no less distinguished by its perfect order and harmony, than by its grandeur and extent. To what purpose then is it to plead, that we know not what degrees of power God may have communicated to created beings? Can it be shewn that they are subject

ject to no laws, that their influence is unconfined, and reaches to all the systems of the universe?

But it is the opinion of a justly celebrated writer *, that to deny created spirits the *natural* power of working miracles is saying *they have no power naturally to do any thing at all.* He had before explained his meaning more fully in the following terms †: *Supposing (which is very unreasonable to suppose) that the natural powers of the highest angels were no greater than the natural powers of men: yet, since thereby an angel would be enabled to do all that invisibly, which a man can do visibly; he would, even on this supposition, be naturally able to do numberless things which we should esteem the greatest of miracles* ‡. Angels, according to this learned writer, could not be equal to men in dignity and power, much less superior to them; nor could they even possess

* Dr. Clarke's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 700, folio edition, or his Boyle's Lectures on the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation, prop. 14th.

† P. 697.

‡ The doctor does not confine this reasoning to *good* angels, but extends it to *evil* ones, p. 699. "If the *devil* has any natural power of doing any thing at all, even but so much as the meanest of men, and be not restrained by God from exercising that natural power, it is evident he will be able, by reason of his invisibility, to work *true and real miracles.*" The antients also, as well as our learned moderns, built their opinion of the vast powers of dæmons upon the subtlety and fineness of their make, and their *spiritual nature.* Tertullian in particular, after speaking of their power to inflict diseases upon men's *bodies*, and to cause a sudden distraction of *soul*, adds, "Suppetit illis ad utramque substantiam hominis adeundam subtilitas et tenuitas sua. Multum spiritalibus viribus licet ut invisibiles et insensibiles in effectu potius quam in actu suo appareant." Apol. c. xxii.

any

any power at all; unless they are able to work miracles upon this earthly globe: and nothing seems to him more unreasonable, than to deny angels the power of doing all which a man can do; which alone, he acknowledges, would be equivalent to a power of performing the greatest miracles, on account of the invisible manner of their operation. This reasoning proceeds upon these two principles: that superior natures have the *same sphere of action* assigned them with those inferior to them; and that they enjoy the very *same powers and privileges*. The former of these is destitute of proof, and the latter is contradicted by the wise order and economy of Providence. Has man the strength or swiftness of brute animals? Can he fly in the air, or dive into the ocean? How much soever man may excel the brutes, he has not the same organs and powers of action; and his operations must therefore be quite different from theirs. The same may be true of *angels* compared with men. Their capacities may be more noble than ours; and they may move in a much more exalted sphere, without being able to do every thing which man is capable of doing.

It is a point that hitherto has rather been taken for granted, than proved, that a power of moving matter is essential to all spiritual beings. It is difficult to discern any necessary connexion between their immateriality and a power over matter*. If they are not united

* The late ingenious Dr. Isaac Watts, in the 6th of his *Philosophical Essays on various Subjects*, (p. 132, 1st edition, 8vo.) attempts to shew, that though the almighty spirit who called the material universe

united to such organized systems of matter as the spirit of man is, upon what grounds shall we ascribe to them that capacity for human actions and enjoyments, which is the sole effect of our union to those particular systems of matter? As reasonably may we suppose that light and darkness dwell together, or that causes the most opposite to each other should all produce the same effects, as that *spiritual* beings should have the same natural powers with *corporeal* ones. To

universe into existence can put the several parts of it into motion as he pleases, no created spirit has any innate power in itself to move any part of matter; that the world of *bodies* and the world of *minds* are so entirely different and separate in their whole nature, substance, and special properties, that they cannot possibly have any communication with each other, except by a particular appointment of God. Spirits, being void of all solidity, cannot move matter by *impulse*, because there can be no contact. Nor can they (without a divine commission) excite motion in bodies by *volition*, there being no natural connexion between their volition and the motion of material beings. The power which the human spirit has over its own body (and thereby over other portions of matter) is no proof that a spirit has in itself a native power to move matter indefinitely; for the human spirit, by all its volitions, can move only those particular parts of the body which God has subjected to voluntary motion, and for which proper muscles are provided, together with the nervous powers which are necessary to move those muscular parts. This limitation of its powers shews that it is not essential to its nature, but owing to the special ordination and constitution of God, who, by uniting such a body to such a spirit, has given to man that degree of power over matter which he possesses. It does not therefore appear that any immaterial created spirit can operate upon matter, unless first united to a body. Whether there are any created spirits who are entirely unembodied, I do not here inquire: all I mean is to shew that their being *spirits* does not prove their power of acting upon matter, and of working miracles.

the

the absurdity of this principle we may add its tendency to countenance the most flagrant immorality. That *polluted* intercourse which was thought to be carried on between the human race and celestial beings *, of which we read in the lying legends of Jewish rabbis, and Gentile poets and philosophers, gained credit, upon the pretence (and was indeed no unnatural consequence from it) that superior beings possess the same powers with mankind, and could at pleasure assume a human form. This maxim has served as a cover for the lust of mankind, in Popish as well as Pagan countries; though, perhaps, it was at first invented to support the credit of a false theology. What the heathen priests once incorporated into their religion,

* We learn from *Socrates*, (apud *Platon. Cratyl.*) that the *heroes* (who, in the Pagan theology, are ranked next after dæmons) "were all of them born from Love, either of a god with a mortal woman, or of mortal men with goddesses." Dionysius Halicarnassensis, (Ant. Rom. l. i. c. lxxvii. p. 61, ed. Oxon.) after relating the rape of Ilia, explains more fully this doctrine of the Pagans. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, endeavoured to approach as near as possible to Paganism; for Josephus speaks of *the angels of God mixing with women, and begetting a most wicked offspring.* Antiq. l. i. c. iv. The same opinion was also embraced by Philo. And what is yet more to be lamented, many *Christian* writers, Justin Martyr, (Apol. i. p. 10 et 33, ed. Thirlbii), Tertullian, (Apol. c. xxii.) Athenagoras, Clemens Alexandrinus, Cyprian and others, maintained that dæmons, in the shape of the heathen gods, had commerce with women, and defiled boys; and they endeavoured to father these sentiments upon a passage of sacred Scripture, Gen. vi. 2. I would not take notice of a circumstance which reflects no small dishonour upon so many of the primitive Christians, did it not appear to be a matter of great importance to be continually recollected, that, when they embraced Christianity, they at the same time defiled it with the grossest doctrines of Paganism.

that

that the philosophers undertook to justify. And too many Christians (in the true spirit of the Jews before them) have ever been more fond of the foulest dregs of Paganism, than of that holy religion which came down from heaven.

If we set aside the wild fables of antiquity (however dignified with the pompous title of *philosophy*), and form our judgment of superior beings by the sober rule of analogy, we shall be under no temptation *to reduce the natural powers of created beings to a low degree* (a liberty which a learned writer* is pleased to allow us): the consideration of their possessing powers superior to mankind will not create any proof, or even the lowest degree of presumption, that they have any power over this earthly globe, or are capable of disturbing the laws by which it is governed. Reason does indeed make known to us one almighty, omnipresent Being, who is at liberty to act every where, and in what manner he pleases; and his omnipotence is the only adequate cause, we are capable of discovering in the whole compass of existence, of those effects which are called miraculous: to him therefore it is most natural to ascribe them. With regard to all other beings, it is not pretended that they exist necessarily; and that it is impossible for them to be excluded from any place, or confined to any: they may therefore, nay they must, have some limits circumscribed to their agency. The very same kind of reasoning which is thought to prove their existence, does much more clearly shew that all their powers are bounded, and their station

* Dr. Clarke's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 697.

fixed

fixed by their omnipotent creator, and that they cannot act beyond their proper sphere. Should it be said, "that allowing that superior created beings have only a limited sphere of action assigned them, yet how does it appear that this lower world itself is not their appointed sphere, and that they have not a power of interposing to work miracles upon this earthly globe?" the answer will be contained in the following section.

SECTION II.

The supposition of the power of any created agents to work miracles of themselves in this lower world, is contradicted by the observation and experience of all ages; there being, in fact, no proper evidence of the truth of any miracles but such as may fitly be ascribed to the Deity. The objection, that God may lay created spirits under a general but not an universal restraint, considered.

THIS being a question of *fact*, it is manifestly incumbent upon those who affirm that miracles have been performed by evil beings acting without the order of God, to produce the facts upon which they choose to rest their cause, and to establish them by an evidence which cannot be overturned*.

* To prevent mi-takes, it may not be improper to observe, that it is not here intended to prove that no superior beings stand in any relation to our system, or that they never operate within its limits in a manner imperceptible by the human senses; but merely that they do not interpose sensibly, and in a miraculous manner. We are not so well acquainted with the regulations of the *spiritual* as with those of the *material* world.

In

In the mean time, if we consult *our own observa-*
on and experience, we find that God governs the
orld by fixed and established laws. The more we
nprove in the knowledge of nature, the more regu-
r does it appear in all its productions. Even the mi-
utest parts of it obey the laws of God as constantly
s the most magnificent bodies in the firmament,
nd co-operate with them in their proper sphere for
ie preservation and benefit of the whole. And this
egularity of the course of nature is an argument,
iat it is not disturbed by any miraculous interposi-
ons. Now, if evil spirits do not work miracles *at*
resent, why should we believe they *ever* have? In-
eed, our not having *seen* any miracles ourselves is a
fficient reason for rejecting those that are *reported*
y others; unless it can be shewn that they were
xpedient in the times and places in which they are said
o have been performed, to answer some extraordinary
urposes of divine providence; or that they are attended
y an evidence of their certainty, superior to the na-
ral presumption of their falsehood, and to the proofs
hich satisfy us with regard to the common events of life.

But this is far from being the case with regard to
ie generality of those miracles which are related in
istory. Amongst them all, we shall find none which
n any account deserve credit; except such as in their
ature, intention and circumstances are worthy of
od; and which therefore, allowing their reality, may
asonably be supposed to have him for their author.
f this kind are the miracles of the Jewish and
hristian dispensations. But we are here inquiring

into

into the reality of such miracles as are thought to ha
been performed by some evil agent. With regard
these, such of them as are best supported have bee
severally weighed in the balance of reason, and bee
found wanting*. It has been shown that they a
destitute of every essential character of truth, ar
bear all the distinguishing features of *human impo
tures;* that they are trifling, ludicrous and absurd i
their own nature; or destitute of all rational inte
tion, and manifestly calculated to answer some lo
or worldly purpose; that they are related by incon
petent witnesses, against whose skill and integri
there are the strongest exceptions; and that they nev
gained credit amongst any but those whose ignoran
and superstition exposed them to the grossest del
sions†. In all those cases in which the facts cann

* Cicero in his second book of *divination*, (in which he confutes tl
arguments advanced in favour of it in the first,) and Fontenelle
his *History of Oracles*, (which is an elegant abridgment of Vandal
larger work on the same subject), have sufficiently discredited tl
several modes of Pagan *prophecy*. And Dr. Douglass in his *Criterion*, ar
many other excellent writers, have very successfully exposed tl
falsehood of the best attested *miracles*, both amongst Papists ar
Pagans.

† Some learned persons, sensible that the devil does not manife
a miraculous power in all countries and in all ages, though th
imagine he sometimes does, maintain, *that the world of spirits may u
dergo many variations, and be subject to different restraints and regulations in d
ferent ages, so as to interfere more or less or not at all in human affairs.* I
Taylor's Scheme of Scripture-Divinity, p. 266. But these (suppose
revolutions in the world of spirits correspond to the known ar
certain revolutions of learning and science here on earth. Nov
whether is it most reasonable to believe that human knowledge co
tract

be denied, their miraculous nature may justly be called in question. The antient prodigies, such of them, I mean, as were not mere fictions, were natural accidents, interpreted arbitrarily, and which created terror only as their causes were unknown. It is merely in those ages and countries in which nature was little understood, that prodigies have abounded. Lastly, very many cases supposed miraculous may be resolved by considering how nature and art may have acted in conjunction*. In a word, all the facts appealed to, in proof of the miraculous agency of evil spirits, are either *not supernatural or not real.* I will not descend into particulars, that I may not repeat what has been so well urged by others; but only add a few general observations which seem to affect the credit of all those miracles, which, in case they had been really performed, could not have God for their author.

1*st.* None have ever yet attempted to shew, that any of the miracles in question are supported by an evidence superior to the natural improbability or absurdity of the facts themselves. How far they are

tracts, and human ignorance and credulity enlarge, the empire of spirits who belong to the other world; or, that it is not their real *power*, but men's *belief* concerning it, which is thus affected by the progress or declension of human knowledge? What Livy says of the prodigies which were reported to have happened at Rome at a particular period, is applicable to dæmoniacal miracles: "Prodigia eo anno multa nuntiata sunt, quæ quo magis credebant simplices ac religiosi homines, eo plura nuntiabantur." Lib. xxiv. c. 10.

* The curious may find this observation very well illustrated in Dr. Hutchinson on Witchcraft.

impro-

improbable or absurd, will appear from what occurs in the sequel. In the mean time all must admit, that the more improbable any fact is, the more unexceptionable should the evidence be by which it is supported: and if it be absurd, no testimony in favour of it can be worthy of credit.

2dly. It is universally allowed, that *most* of these miracles were the mere effects of human artifice and fraud. Now, if *most* were so, why not *all?* The principles upon which all men condemn so large a *part*, if carried to their just extent, would oblige them to condemn the *whole*. At least, it must be allowed to be incumbent on those who make a distinction, to point out the difference between those dæmoniacal miracles which they reject, and those which they receive: a task which they have hitherto prudently declined*.

3dly. The reason assigned for not allowing all of them to be human frauds, viz. "lest, if, out of so many facts alleged, none of them are true, we should destroy the credit of all human testimony, even that

* We might add, that the behaviour of the persons who are thought to have performed miracles and delivered oracles by the assistance of evil spirits, is exactly such as agrees with the supposition of their being destitute of that assistance, and having no other dependence than human artifice and fraud. Now, if their miracles were real, why did they always act as if they had been fictitious? Why were not the works performed in such a manner as clearly to manifest the interposition of some superior being? And why did the conductors of the antient oracles, in order to maintain their credit, take such pains to procure early and universal intelligence, if secret, distant and future events were supernaturally revealed? See Lucian's Alexand. seu Pseudomant.

upon

upon which the miracles of Scripture are built;" is both inconclusive in itself, and dishonourable to true religion. Notwithstanding these, and ten thousand other instances of the deceitfulness of human testimony; yet has it ever been allowed and found, under proper circumstances, to be a very safe and reasonable ground of reliance. The numerous frauds of every kind, which have obtained in the world, are a ground of caution, not of universal scepticism. Though many miracles have been forged, it will not from thence follow, that no real miracles have ever been performed. Nay, "how can we account for a practice so universal of forging miracles for the support of false religions, if on some occasions they had not actually been wrought for the confirmation of a true one? Or how is it possible that so many spurious copies should pass upon the world, without some genuine original from which they were drawn, whose known existence and tried success might give an appearance of probability to the counterfeit*?" It would be unreasonable either to receive or reject all miracles alike, in case there be a just distinction between some and others. Now the miracles of Scripture are more credible in their own nature than any others, being performed for ends of the highest importance, such as are suitable to the character of an infinitely perfect Being, and which could not be accomplished in any other method. Their truth is confirmed by witnesses of the most unsuspected credit;

* Dr. Middleton's Prefatory Discourse to a Letter from Rome, p. 86—88.

by the public revolutions and events which they produced, (such as the conversion of the world to the Christian faith *,) and which cannot possibly be accounted for but upon the supposition of their truth; by the clear prophecies delivered by the authors of these works, of the completion of which distant ages are witnesses; and by a variety of other arguments peculiar to these miracles, and which serve to detect and expose the falsehood of all others. Those seem to me but ill to consult the credit of the Gospel miracles, who place them on a level with gross impostures, instead of pointing out the wide difference between them; and who have no other way of supporting the Christian faith than by countenancing lies and popular errors, which in all ages has created the strongest prejudice against it, and given occasion to boundless suspicions †.

4thly. Many even of those miracles which of all others seemed to have the fairest pretensions to credit have been *undeniably proved* to be mere impostures. Among these I reckon many of the miracles of popery ‡, and those of witchcraft §, both of them attested upon oath by pretended eye-witnesses, and

* The miracles of Christianity confirmed a doctrine contrary to men's strongest prejudices, and could not be believed without danger; other miracles, for the most part, cannot be rejected without danger, and are designed to establish popular and profitable errors.

† "Dum per mendacium tenditur, ut fides doceatur, id demum agitur, ut nulli habetur fides." St. August. ad Consentium.

‡ Several remarkable concessions of Papists themselves upon this head are cited below, ch. iii. sect. iv. art. 5.

§ See Hutchinson on Witchcraft, ch. i.

the

the latter examined into with all the accuracy and authority of a court of justice, and yet both afterwards found to be the offspring of fraud and delusion. Among all those which have escaped detection, there is no ground to presume that there is one either more credible in itself, or more strongly attested, than those in which the imposture has been discovered. And therefore, without troubling ourselves to account for every particular relation, is there not the highest reason to believe that, had they all been equally subject to examination, and undergone a rigorous inquiry, the imposture must have been discovered in all?

Now, if there be no sufficient reason to believe that any superior spirits acting without the order of God have ever, from the beginning of the world to this day, performed a single miracle upon our earthly globe, how void of all foundation must be the ascribing to them a miraculous power! Were they possessed of such a power, it is natural to suppose they would have exerted it *frequently*, especially as it may be so easily made subservient to the purposes of malevolence and impiety. What miseries of every kind might not wicked spirits, from a principle of envy and hatred, introduce amongst mankind? And if good spirits enjoyed an equal liberty of doing good offices to men, what a theatre of contention would our globe have been between spirits of such opposite dispositions and designs! And therefore, if in a long succession of ages there has been no appearance of any such contest between virtuous and wicked

spirits;

spirits; if no motives whatever have excited the one or the other to exert a miraculous power, so much as *once;* is it not a natural inference, that they do not possess it? With regard to God, indeed, reason informs us, that he who established the course of nature can change it at pleasure, even whether he has already done so or not. But the case is different as to other beings, whose powers and operations are only to be known (in a natural way) by observation and experience. God is manifest in every part of nature; but who can point out the effects of other spirits, and their operations on the universe? And if we see no effects of their agency on this earthly globe, if no such effects have ever been seen, there can be no ground from reason to ascribe it to them. It is as repugnant to the observation and experience of all ages, to ascribe to evil spirits a miraculous power, as it is to ascribe life to the inanimate, or speech to the brute creation.

To destroy the force of this argument, some have pleaded, "that superior created intelligences, evil as well as good, do not want the *natural power* of working miracles, but only the *liberty* of exerting it: and notwithstanding they may be restrained from using it *frequently* or *commonly*, yet that it can never be proved (as a great* writer expresses it) that they are under such restraints, *universally*, *perpetually*, and *without exception*." There is evidently, I acknowledge, a real difference between *having the power* of performing miracles or of producing any other effects,

* Dr. Clarke, vol. ii. p. 697, folio edition.

and

and the actual *exercise* of that power; and those persons may have the power who do not exercise it, provided their not exercising it be the matter of their own choice. But I scarce understand the propriety of representing any persons as having a power, which they are *restrained* from exercising by others. As far as they lose their *liberty* of exerting it, their *power* is abridged. The malefactor confined in a dungeon, and the slave chained to a galley, by losing the liberty loses the power of going beyond the limits of his dungeon and the length of his chain. Not however to insist upon this; I would observe in answer to this objection, First, that were the Deity to lay superior beings under such a *general restraint* as is here supposed, the removal of that restraint, and the setting them at liberty on any *particular occasion*, on purpose that they might work particular miracles, and with no other view, would be giving them more than a bare *permission* (as some represent it); it would be giving them both *a power* and *a commission* to perform those particular miracles on that special occasion. The miraculous works in this case could not be considered in the same light as the ordinary actions of free agents, to whom God indulges the use of their natural powers; but would argue a special licence, and even the express appointment of the Deity. Now, we are not contending that God may not commission and empower whom he pleases to work miracles; this being, in effect, the same thing as performing them himself. And he can never give his sanction to imposture. So that the objection we are considering, were it well

grounded,

grounded, can never serve the main cause of those by whom it is urged, or enable them to shew that miracles may accompany a false doctrine. Secondly, there is however no manner of foundation for the objection. For our judgments are to be guided by facts, not by arbitrary hypotheses: and therefore, unless it can be shewn that there is full and sufficient evidence of the truth of some miracles which cannot fitly be ascribed to God, there is just the same reason to believe that superior created intelligences are *universally* and *perpetually* restrained from working miracles, as that they are *generally* so. The very same observation and experience which convince us that there are any laws of nature at all, demonstrate that those laws are universally and invariably executed. Thirdly, the objection proceeds upon a supposition not only groundless, but absurd: it supposes that God communicates and continues to his creatures, powers which he has hitherto, through an unknown length of ages past, almost totally restrained them from exerting, and which he will equally restrain them from exerting through all future generations. Indeed, as it cannot be shewn that he has *in any single instance hitherto* permitted, so there is all imaginable reason to believe he never will *hereafter in any single instance* permit, them to exercise that miraculous power which they are supposed to possess. And can there be a stronger reflection upon the wisdom of God, than to maintain that he constantly denies his creatures the use of those natural powers which he bestows and preserves? He *has indeed* fixed the bounds, beyond which they cannot

not act: nevertheless, it is a flagrant contradiction to all that we know of the works of God, to suppose that within those bounds they are not allowed freely to exert themselves. And, therefore, what some are pleased to call a *restraint upon the liberty* of superior beings is more properly *a natural inability* of working miracles*; and the argument against their possessing a miraculous power, from their never having made use of it, remains in its full force.

To what purpose is it to plead, "that we do not know the *other* world?" We are not unacquainted with *this*, to which the present inquiry refers. In the foregoing section we have endeavoured to shew, that if we reason from analogy, and that view which we are able to take of the works of God, the various orders of beings superior to the human kind *act only within a certain limited sphere.* And if what we have advanced farther in the present section be just, *this lower world is not their appointed sphere of action;* and consequently they are prevented from working miracles by the very law of their nature, without a special divine assistance and commission. Now, if there are no other beings capable of performing miracles, to whom shall we ascribe them but to God? Upon this principle, they must be considered as the immediate operation of the divine power.

* If this reasoning appear to any to be inconclusive, my main argument will not be affected: for that equally holds good, whether God by *a perpetual law restrains* all invisible agents from interposing at any time to alter the regular course of things in this lower world, or whether they *want a natural power* of interposing for any such purpose.

SECTION

SECTION III.

The laws of nature being ordained by God, and essential to the order and happiness of the world, it is impossible God should delegate to any of his creatures a power of working miracles, by which those divine establishments may be superseded and controlled.

By the laws of nature, I do not mean those laws to which superior invisible agents are subjected, but the rules by which this visible world is governed, and more especially the usual course and order of things in the system to which we belong *. When miracles are performed, these laws are superseded, and may be suspended and controlled. I am here to shew that the idea of miracles, as contradictions to the laws and course of nature, contains a proof of their never being performed without the immediate agency or order of the sovereign Author and Lord of nature. Consider the design of these laws, and the authority by which they were enacted. The laws of nature were at first ordained, and are continually preserved, by God; they are the rules by which he exercises his dominion over the world. His wisdom did not, and indeed could not, see fit to leave the world without laws; or (which would have been much the same thing) leave those laws to be controlled at the will of his creatures, to the strict and constant observance of which we owe the regularity and uniformity of the natural world; the settled order of causes and effects

* See ch. i. sect. i. p. 4.

in

in the moral; and the continued harmony of the universe, all the parts of which are related to each other, and conspire together to carry on one common design, and thus demonstrate that all things are under the steady and constant direction of *one* ruling counsel. Nothing gives so much force to the argument from the natural world in favour of true theism, or enables us so effectually to answer the principal objections against it, as the stability and invariable permanency of the course of nature. The constancy of it constitutes its beauty. And what would be the consequence of God's departing from the rules which he has settled in the world, but the violation and disparagement of his own majesty and wisdom, and the perplexity, confusion and distress of his creatures, instead of that order which now reigns every where? If God did not govern the world by steady measures *, no room would be given us for the exertion and improvement of our faculties, nor any assistance afforded us for the direction of our conduct; a grown man would no more know how to manage himself in the affairs of life, than an infant just born: which one consideration abundantly over-balances whatever particular inconveniences may thence arise. The laws of nature being ordained for the general good, are not violated or superseded even by the great Ruler of the world himself, to prevent partial evil, or on any occasion whatever, unless when the most important ends of his government necessarily require a miraculous

* See above ch. i. sect. ii. p. 18; and Berkley's Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, part i. sect. 31, 51.

interposition. What probability then is there, that any other beings should be able to dispose of the laws of nature, and interrupt them at their pleasure, or (which is the same thing) prevent them from producing their usual effects? Nay, there seems to be a necessity that natural causes should operate in the most uniform and steady manner. For, were God to grant to superior beings, some of them good, others evil, all of them finite and imperfect, a power of working miracles at pleasure, such as might supersede and control the operation of nature, there could be no law of nature, no settlement or fixed constitution of things at all; every appointment of God for our benefit might be defeated, and the order of this lower world be destroyed. If spirits, according to the doctrine of the Platonic philosophers, are naturally able to move matter, or any particular parts of it, not only in our system, but in every other, throughout the universe, what a boundless empire would they enjoy! and with what extensive desolation might they overspread the face of the whole creation! But is it credible that God has subjected the universe to the power of every single spirit superior to mankind, however malignant in his disposition? The order* of the world seems to make it necessary, that all created agents should be effectually restrained or disabled from disturbing that order,

* Should it be here objected, that the order of the world does not forbid *rare* and *occasional*, but only *frequent* and *common* disturbances of the course of nature, I answer, that we have already proved ch. ii sect. ii. p. 32, that there is no foundation for this distinction, as it respects superior created agents, who appear to be not only *generally* but *universally* restrained from working miracles.

in

in the manner they might do, did they possess the power of miracles. And there must be a divine law or constitution, preventing the interposition of superior beings in this manner upon our earthly globe in particular. Unable as we might have been to determine by speculative reasonings, or arguments *à priori*, what constitution of the universe it became God to establish; yet we may discern the wisdom, the fitness, and in some degree the necessity, of that constitution which we see he has actually established, and consequently the impossibility of its being subjected to the arbitrary will of any of his creatures, from whose dominion and control we find it in fact to be exempted. The laws which the wisdom of God ordained for the general good, his omnipotence carries into certain execution, without the least danger of being checked or controlled by any opposing power. Hence arises the impossibility of miracles being ever performed without the order of God. Not that the works themselves, abstractedly considered, require the exertion of an infinite power *; but the course of nature being a divine settlement, it cannot, in any instance whatever, be overturned by any finite power without God's express appointment. This is affirming nothing more, than that there is no being in the universe capable of opposing the Deity with success.

The most eminent philosophers and divines have maintained, that the law of nature is not only the *ordinance* but the *operation* of God, and denotes the rule by which his energy is unceasingly exerted in the

* See above, ch. i. sect. iii. p. 28—30.

government

government of the world; and that natural effects are as much the operation of God as even miracles themselves. This doctrine is strenuously maintained by Dr. Clarke in particular, in many of his writings *. And therefore, if his doctrine be true, by contending for the power of evil spirits to work miracles, does he not contend for their power to suspend and control the operations of divine omnipotence? But whether you consider the course of nature as the regular and

* Sermons, vol. i. p. 620, 621; vol. ii. p. 287, 296. 297, 697, 698, folio edition. In some of the passages here referred to, I acknowledge, the doctor, in speaking of God's acting upon matter continually and every moment, distinguishes between his doing it *immediately by himself*, and his doing it *mediately by some created intelligent beings*; and the latter seems to him most probable. On this supposition, indeed, it might be as easy for created intelligences to *alter* as to *continue* the course of nature. But if matter be (as this very eminent philosopher affirms) incapable of any *powers* whatsoever excepting only this one *negative power*, that every part of it will, of itself, always and necessarily continue in that state, whether of rest or motion, wherein it at present is; and if all those things which we commonly say are the effects of the *natural powers of matter*, are the effects of some intelligent being's acting upon matter continually and every moment; to whom is it so reasonable to ascribe this universal and perpetual agency on matter, and every particle of it, throughout the unbounded universe, as to the eternal and omnipresent Deity? We are sure that matter cannot resist the unremitted and almighty energy of his sovereign will, who only speaks, and it is done; who commands, and it stands fast for ever. But how does it appear that created spirits have any power to move matter of themselves, and without the special commission of God? (See above, ch. ii. sect. i. p. 40. And is it not more reasonable to believe, that the Deity maintains his sovereignty in a more immediate manner over his own world, and those laws of motion on which its order depends, than that he has subjected them to the inclinations and volition of *any of his creatures*, who are necessarily finite and imperfect?

continued

continued operation of God, or as his constitution only, and the fixed rule and plan of his government; it cannot be controlled at any time but by the same authority by which it was at first *established*, and is continually *preserved*. And consequently miracles, which supersede the laws of nature and providence, and display a sovereign dominion over them, do not only most naturally bespeak but necessarily argue the immediate interposition and authority of the Lord of nature, the omnipotent creator and governor of the world, who reigns without any rival. If it be true in fact, that God governs the world by general laws, and it be necessary that he should do so; he has not delegated, he cannot delegate, to any of his creatures any power over them. To do this, would be to resign the reins of government. But the necessity of God's preserving the laws of nature inviolate will more fully appear, as we proceed in considering the farther absurdities which attend the contrary doctrine.

SECTION IV.

The ascribing to any superior beings, besides God, and those immediately commissioned by him, the power of working miracles, subverts the foundation of natural piety, and is a fruitful source of idolatry and superstition.

It is evident that, prior to all supernatural revelation, we have no other way of knowing God than by the works of nature. From these we infer the existence, and attributes, and providence of their almighty Author; principles which are the basis both of all re-

ligion

ligion and of all our happiness. But if superior beings acting without the order of God can work miracles, shall we not lose our proof of the existence and perfections of God from the works of nature? For some miracles, such as turning inanimate rods into living beings, and raising the dead, are so perfectly similar to the works of creation, and the original gift of life, as not easily to be distinguished from them; and afford just reason to conclude, that any of the authors of such miracles might be the creators of the world: which would leave it doubtful to whom we were indebted for our existence, amongst the numerous beings equally capable of conferring upon us that important favour*.

If others besides God could change the order of nature, what evidence should we have of his wisdom and providence in the continual government of the world? For this evidence arises from that regularity and uniformity which we observe in the course of nature, proceeding on from age to age without interruption. Could others change the order of nature, even when acting in opposition to nature's Lord, what reason would there be to fear that there were other gods in the universe besides him, such as were independent upon him, and as opposite to him

* Even without such an inducement as miracles, many amongst the heathens have ascribed the creation of serpents and other noxious animals, and even of the whole visible world, to an evil being, in opposition to the divine intention. Nay, some learned advocates of the Christian revelation, in this enlightened age, seem to think that invisible beings may be possessed of powers equal to the making and governing of worlds.

in

in their natures and designs as they were in their operations? Nay, on this supposition, there would be just ground to apprehend, that he who had given laws to nature had himself a *superior* lord, who could control his appointments, and subvert his empire.

Even if it could be proved, upon the principles of our adversaries, that the author of nature had no superior or equal, and that it was by his permission that others shared with him the government of the world, this alone would be destructive to all true piety. If the course of nature be not under the sole direction of God, what foundation can there be for our worship of God alone, and for the continual exercises of gratitude and submission to him, in every condition? If we believe that other invisible beings can interpose in our affairs at their own pleasure, and either inflict punishments or bestow blessings upon us, such as are quite out of the ordinary course of nature, and contrary to it; could we consider ourselves as under the protection and government of God? Would it not be natural and unavoidable for us to pay homage to those who had the disposal of our lot, and, by all the means which we judged suitable to that end, to engage their favour, and avert their displeasure? It was this belief of the power of dæmons, to dispense both good and evil to mankind, that was the foundation of that worship which was paid them in the Pagan world. And had they given proof of their power, it would have been unreasonable to deny them worship*. To fear or hope without any grounds, is very

*See below, ch. ii. sect. v. p. 74, 75.

absurd:

absurd: but to fear or hope where there is just reason for either, where there is real power either to protect or punish us, is an evident dictate of the understanding. The passions of hope and fear do indeed necessarily arise in the human mind, upon the contemplation of a power that may be employed either for our benefit or prejudice, and will ever be accompanied with a suitable concern to render that power propitious to us*. Concerning the Jews themselves, even after their return from their captivity at Babylon, when they are generally supposed to be entirely cured of their fondness for idolatry, we are told, that on the day of expiation they offered a goat to *Sammael* or *Satan*, that he might not accuse them of their crimes before God, because they believed him to have the power of doing it†.

With regard to Christians, it is in words, chiefly, that many of them differ from the antient Pagans,

* It seems very reasonable to infer from hence, that no miracles were ever performed amongst the Pagans, except by the messengers of the true God, with the express and declared intention of manifesting and distinguishing him from the false: for without this precaution the Pagans would naturally have referred these works (had any such been wrought amongst them) to their own gods, considered them as new displays of their divinity, and been engaged to worship them with new zeal and ardour. This is evident from the conduct of the idolatrous Lycaonians, who, before they were better instructed by St. Paul, concluded from the miracle he performed upon the cripple, that the gods were come down in the likeness of men, and proceeded without delay to perform the rites of adoration Acts xiv. 8—18.

† See Buxtorf. Chald. Talmud. & Rab. Lexicon on the word *Sammael*, p. 1495, and Bochart's Hierozoic. l. ii. c. lv. p. 632.

who

who deified the supposed principle of evil. If they refuse the devil the name of God, they go very far in allowing him the attributes and prerogatives of the Godhead. They conceive of him as a kind of omnipresent and omniscient spirit*, and ascribe to him such a dominion over the human race as can belong to none but the sovereign of the universe. To the devil they ascribe frosts, and tempests, and infectious air, blights upon the fruits of the earth, the diseases of cattle, the disasters and distempers of men's bodies, phrensy and the alienation of their minds, and the power of inflicting even cruel deaths†. This error has begotten amongst Christians, though not an idolatrous worship, yet endless and cruel superstitions‡, particularly witchcraft, which alone has occasioned a vast effusion of human blood; as the records of every country can witness. No less than nine hundred witches have in some very small provinces been put to death in the space of a few years§. Nevertheless, the grand principle upon which this detestable art is built, viz. *the natural power of the devil to destroy men's bodies*

* Tertullian. Apol. c. xxii.

† Tertullian. Apol. c. xxii. & de Anim. c. lvii. and Dr. Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History, p. 172, 173. Dr. Whitby on Luke xiii. 16. Heb. ii. 14. Josephus de B. J. l. vii. c. 25. and Tobit vi. 7. ch. viii. 2. ch. iii. 8.

‡ We hence see with how little reason it is affirmed, that inasmuch as we are liable to evils, it can make no difference to whom they are ascribed. Besides, did the evils we suffer proceed from the power and pleasure of evil spirits, why are they not greater and more numerous?

§ Mead's Medica Sacra, præfat. xi. xii.

and

*and lives, to bring upon them innumerable other calamities, and to work miracles**, is still maintained by the greatest names in the republic of learning. On this foundation, laid for him by philosophy, the wizard easily raises his own superstructure. While the philosopher asserts the power of wicked spirits to produce the most extraordinary effects, out of the common course of nature; the wizard presumes, and not unreasonably, that they have the *use* of this power: for a power which they cannot use is in effect no power at all. And he advances only one step farther when he pretends to a familiar intercourse with them, or to be skilled in the manner of setting them to work. Now this difference between them is very trifling; since, if the devil can interpose in the manner supposed by both, it matters not whether he does it with or without the instrumentality of human beings. Most melancholy is it to reflect, how much the general principle we are here opposing, viz. the power of Satan to work miracles, and the various superstitions grounded upon it, have contributed in all ages and in all nations, to the disquiet and corruption of the human race, and to the extinction of rational piety. This consideration alone, were there no other, should check the zeal of Christians to maintain an opinion so destructive to our virtue and happiness and which the wisest heathens, from principles of benevolence and piety, earnestly wished and laboured to extirpate†.

I

* Dr. Clarke's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 760, folio.

† Superstitio fusa per gentes, oppressit omnium ferè animos, atque hominum

In a word, if we entertain just and honourable sentiments of the constitution of the universe, and its all-wise and benevolent author, can we believe that he has subjected us to the pleasure and disposal of superior beings, many of whom are supposed to be as capricious and malevolent as they are powerful? Has God put our very life, and the whole happiness of it, into such hands? This some maintain he has done; and this he must have done, if he has granted them the power of working miracles at pleasure: an opinion which cannot fail to rivet Heathens in their idolatry, and Christians in the most detestable superstitions.

SECTION V.

If miracles were performed in favour of false doctrines, mankind would be exposed to frequent and unavoidable delusion.

MIRACLES may be considered either apart by themselves, or in their relation* to the mission and doctrines of a prophet. It is in the former view that they have been considered in the preceding sections of this chapter: we shall now examine them in the latter; which will furnish us with new evidence of their being works peculiar to God. What I shall attempt in this

hominum imbecillitatem occupavit.—Multum enim & nobismet ipsis, & nostris profuturi videbamur, si eam funditus sustulissemus. *Cicero de divinat.* l. ii. c. 72.

*What circumstances are necessary to point out this relation, is particularly shewn below, ch. v. at the beginning.

section

section is to shew, that were evil spirits at liberty t work miracles to impose upon mankind, the erro might be absolutely invincible. In proof of this as sertion I appeal to the *natural sense* of mankind con cerning miracles, and to those impressions whic they always make upon the mind, when free fro the bias of prejudice.

It is certainly more natural to refer miracles to Go than to any other invisible being: for reason inform us clearly and certainly, that God can, but does nc equally inform us that any other being can, perfor these works*. And inasmuch as the course of na ture is a divine constitution, it must be unnatural t suppose that any being besides God is at liberty t control it†. Accordingly it appears in fact, tha mankind consider miracles as the works of God, an as divine testimonials to a prophet, whenever they ar performed and appealed to as such. This is evident not only from the immediate regard‡ which has bee shewn to genuine miracles whenever they have bee wrought, but also from the frequent pretensions t them in all ages and in all nations of the world. Ha they not been generally considered as divine works and authentic proofs of a divine mission, they woul not have been forged in support of every false religio that pretended to come from God. Nay, so stron an impression of their own divinity do genuine mira cles leave upon the human mind, that their force i

*Ch. ii sect. ii. † Ch. ii. sect. iii.

‡ 1 Kings xvii. 24; ch. xviii. 39. John iii. 2. Matt. xv. 30, 31 ch. ix. 8. Luke xiii. 13, 17. Acts iii. 10; ch. iv. 31; ch. xiv. 11.

fe

felt even by those whose natural sentiments concerning them are most perverted by the errors of superstition and the refinements of learning. It is strongly felt by the whole Christian world, notwithstanding their speculative opinions are calculated to defeat it*; and not less by infidels and atheists, who never think themselves safe in rejecting religion till they have persuaded themselves that every history of miracles is false. Spinoza himself, as Mr. Bayle† assures us, said to his friends, "that if he could be convinced of the resurrection of Lazarus, he would break his whole system into pieces, and readily embrace the common faith of Christians." The very Pharisees, when most blinded and hardened by their malice against Christ, confessed the force of this evidence in his favour, when they said, *This man does many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him*‡. And indeed the whole world would have believed on him on account of his miracles, had they not been prejudiced against his doctrine. I add, that Christians must allow, that miracles, when performed in attestation of a professed mission from God, constitute an evidence adapted to the frame of the human mind, and the genuine sentiments of nature; for both our Saviour and his apostles contented themselves with the mere exhibition of this evidence, and then left it to produce its proper effect.

Now if miracles, by their own natural influence,

* Preface.

† General Dictionary, article Spinoza, note R.

‡ John xi. 47, 48.

are calculated to procure immediate credit to the doctrine they attest; if they constitute an evidence adapted to the common sense and feelings of mankind; if they make an impression which scarce any resistance can totally prevent or efface: it is an easy and obvious inference from hence, that, if they were performed in favour of false doctrines, the generality of mankind would be necessarily exposed to frequent delusion. And those would be the least able to resist the impression of miracles, who had the strongest sense of God upon their minds, the most honourable apprehensions of his natural and moral government, and were the most fearful of incurring his displeasure by rejecting any revelation of his will.

Here it will be objected, "That if miracles were wrought to confirm falsehood, the nature of the *doctrine* might serve to guard us against being deceived, and direct us to ascribe the works to some evil agent, who was *permitted* to perform them for the *trial* of mankind." In answer to this objection, it might perhaps be sufficient to observe, that what some call God's *permitting*, would be in reality *empowering* and *commissioning* evil spirits to work miracles. For God's removal of the restraint or disability which those spirits are under at all other times, amounts to his giving them both a power and a commission to work miracles on this particular occasion*. And this God cannot do in confirmation of falsehood.

But much stress being laid on this objection, we will offer some farther observations upon it. The

* See above, ch. ii. sect. ii. p. 53.

most

st arbitrary and unnatural suppositions, when they e been long made, are thought at last to have some ndation to support them, and require the same ice to be taken of them, as if they had. It is not e in fact, * that any miracles have ever been per- med in support of error, on purpose to try our h. At least, no sufficient evidence appears of the th of any such miracles. Nor do the ends of the ine government seem to require that mankind uld be exposed to this particular trial. The temp- ons which occur in the ordinary course of provi- ice are abundantly sufficient to exercise our vir- ; and it is quite needless that miracles should be ought, merely to put it to a farther proof. Now if son cannot shew that mankind *ought to be*, and erience convinces us that they never *have been*, osed to the delusion of false doctrines inforced by racles, the notion that they may be so must be sidered as a mere fiction. Besides, how unlike uld such a trial be to those ordained by God! The er arise from passions planted in our nature for the st valuable purposes, and from the most useful and essary relations of life. But our adversaries sup- se, miracles may be achieved with no other view m as *mere* matter of trial to mankind; which is ugnant to all our knowledge of the divine dispen- ions. Not to observe, that errors inforced by mi- les would, very frequently at least, constitute a l rather of the understanding than of the heart; d in this respect, likewise, it would differ from se to which God has subjected mankind.

* See ch. ii. sect. ii.

To

To convince us more fully that no miracles can ever accompany a false doctrine, merely for the trial of mankind, I would observe, that they are not capable of answering this end upon the principles of those by whom it is assigned. Were a false doctrine to be attested by miracles, it must be asserted, either that the falsehood of it was discerned, or that it was not. If the falsehood of the doctrine was discerned, and it was at the same time known that the miracles attesting it might and must be performed by some evil agent; in this case, where would be the trial? The miracles, it would be allowed, were no evidence of the truth or divinity of the doctrine, and contained no recommendation of it, or motive to embrace it; nay, they could only serve to furnish an invincible prejudice against it, on account of the known malevolence of their author. If, on the other hand, the falsehood of the doctrine was not and could not be discerned; the miracles attending it being considered only as proofs of the interposition of some superior being, the mind must be thrown into a state of perplexity and suspense about the author of the works, and remain void of all inducement either to embrace or reject the doctrine. And consequently here also there would be no trial at all. We are never more in danger of charging God foolishly, than when we judge of him, not by what he has done, but by what we presume it becomes him to do. It might convince us, how little a way bare speculation can carry us in all researches into the nature and government of God, to find the strongest minds, when trusting to speculation alone, ascribing to him unworthy measures,

and inventing designs and ends for them which they are not adapted to answer. The very scheme which assigns the trial of mankind as the end of God's permitting miracles to be performed in confirmation of error, does itself shew it could not be promoted by them. Now, whoever calls upon us to believe that miracles may be wrought without any necessity, and even without any use, demands our assent to what contradicts all our ideas of divine wisdom, and the whole course of the divine dispensations, as well as the several reasons before urged to shew that no variations from the established laws of nature can take place, except when they are indispensably necessary to promote the most important purposes of God's administration.

Though miracles wrought in support of error, according to the idea some have formed of these works, would not constitute any trial of mankind; yet, if we consider them in their true light, they carry so much weight and authority with them, as most powerfully and effectually to recommend to the belief of mankind the doctrine which they attest. And, consequently, were they to accompany error, they could not fail, in very many instances, of procuring it credit; as we endeavoured to shew at the beginning of the section. In order to confirm what was there advanced, it is only necessary to add, that in this case the consideration of the *doctrine* which the miracles attested could not universally secure men from deception. Man is a creature liable to error, and his judgment (easily imposed upon by specious

appearances) often pronounces that to be reasonable which is not so. And even when a doctrine appears doubtful, or strongly suspicious, mankind are more ready to call in question their own reasonings concerning it, than to dispute the authority of the miracles which are thought to recommend it. Innumerable cases there are, in which human reason, in its most improved state, is unable to form any judgment concerning the probability or improbability of a divine interposition to confirm particular doctrines. Do not the most learned and even the wisest of mankind differ widely concerning the reasonableness of certain opinions? Nay, what contrary censures do they pass upon them! Is there a sect of Christians which does not represent the distinguishing tenets of all the other sects as unworthy of God, however credible they appear to those who hold them? How then can the bulk of mankind, the most ignorant and illiterate, and those in particular who have been educated in all the darkness of idolatry,—how can they in every case judge with certainty, whether a doctrine be worthy a divine interposition, or detect the falsehood of it, when it brings the testimonial of miracles?

Let us put a case the most favourable of any to those whom we here oppose. They affirm, "that if the most numerous and illustrious miracles were performed in support of idolatry, we ought to disregard them; that, the doctrine being false, the works could not be divine." Let us then suppose that such miracles were actually wrought for the purpose here assigned, the confirmation of *idolatry*, in the sense they

they imagine it to have been practised by many in the Pagan world, that is, in confirmation of the worship of certain powerful beings, to whom the government of particular parts of nature was delegated by the supreme Divinity. From what was observed above * it appears, that, had miracles been performed amongst the Heathens, these works must, by their own natural influence, have inflamed their devotion towards the reputed authors of them. And in farther justification of their idolatry they might be ready to plead, "that the honour paid to inferior deities was warranted by the miracles which they performed; because such changes in the order of nature could not take place but by the appointment of the great Lord of nature; and because they were in themselves displays of that authority and dominion over mankind with which he had invested them: and consequently that disowning their authority, and refusing them their due homage, was acting contrary to the will of the supreme Being, and to the truth of things; refusing to acknowledge those inferior deities to be, what they really were, our divinely appointed governors and guardians." If a Heathen offered this plea, the validity of which, or of one very similar to it, seems to be admitted in Scripture †, it would be difficult to convince him of the weakness of it, especially as it gave a sanction to all his strongest prejudices and inclinations ‡. Now, if in a case thought to be so plain,

* Ch. ii. sect. iv. p. 63, 64.

† Isaiah xli. 21—23, cited below, ch. iii. sect. ii.

‡ What is here offered to shew that miracles would have riveted

Pagans

plain, and certainly of the first importance, mankind are liable to delusion, in how many thousand instances besides would they not be open to it, if miracles were performed to give a sanction to imposture!

And even supposing the doctrine attested by miracles to be immoral, or favourable to our corrupt passions; this consideration would indeed awaken the caution and prejudice of a few good men against it, but would only so much the more strongly recommend it to the affection of the greatest part of mankind. When I consider upon what accounts the Heathen world did not like to retain the true God in their knowledge, what vices they ascribed to their chief divinities, what flagrant immoralities they practised as rites of religion, even without any such sanction as that of miracles; when I farther reflect, how often the moral precepts of the Gospel have been censured as impracticable, and their strict purity urged as an objection against their divinity; and that even Christians themselves, of all denominations, are continually corrupting the sanctity of their religion, or relaxing its rigour, and striving, under different pretences, to bring it nearer to the level of human frailty; I cannot help being of opinion, that a doctrine mild and gentle to men's favourite passions and pursuits, if it was supported by miracles, would be a temptation too strong for human nature to resist, and such as God therefore will never suffer it to be exposed to.

A very learned writer, who has done singular ser-

Pagans in their idolatry, is apparently true with respect to *Papists*, were such works to be performed by them.

vice

vice to the cause of religion, has asserted, *Supposing that the miracles pretended in favour of Paganism were all real miracles, yet, as they lead men to a corrupt religion and idolatrous worship, no reverence, no regard is to be paid to them* *. The worship which men pay to God will ever be suitable to the ideas they form concerning his nature. The most immoral rites of Pagan devotion were conformable to the character of the objects of that devotion. And while men entertain corrupt notions of their gods, they are not likely to discern the absurdity of a corrupt religion. And therefore miracles performed in support of it would strengthen, and (in their opinion, at least) justify, their attachment to it. In a word, whoever considers the true nature of miracles, the power which they necessarily imply, and the forcible impressions they make on the human heart, together with the real character of mankind, will hardly deny that, if they were wrought to give evidence to falsehood, they would unavoidably, in numberless instances, procure it credit; especially if he farther takes into the account the understanding and sagacity ascribed to created spirits. We are indeed exposed to the danger of delusion by the artifices of men. Nevertheless, against human craft human caution is a sufficient security: but men are not a match for superior beings.

Now, if God's allowing to evil spirits the liberty of working miracles in confirmation of false doctrines

* Dr. Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, vol. ii. p. 275. Dr. Clarke likewise had advanced the same doctrine, vol. ii. p. 699, 700, 702, folio edition.

would

would necessarily subject mankind to great delusion, will it not follow from hence, that he cannot have granted them any such liberty? This consequence will be allowed by those who think honourably of the divine government. Who, without being compelled by such evidence as cannot be resisted, would represent the Deity as placing his rational creatures, even those who with upright hearts were endeavouring to learn his will, under a dispensation which, without any fault of theirs, would promote their deception in matters which concerned their moral conduct and their eternal happiness? Such a dispensation as this seems to be utterly inconsistent with God's wisdom and goodness, with his essential rectitude, and love of righteousness and truth, and with all the noblest perfections of his nature. If God *does not*, and indeed (for the reasons assigned above *) *cannot*, suffer the order of the *natural* world to be disturbed at the will of created agents at any other time; can it be thought that he will permit and employ them to make this miraculous disturbance, merely to promote a farther and much greater evil, the delusion, depravity and misery of the *moral* world? Scarce is it possible for us to dishonour the Deity more than by so groundless and injurious an imputation. If falsehood and vice are objects of God's disapprobation, he must have reserved in his own hands the power of working miracles. Now, it is not more impossible that this prerogative of God should be usurped by violence, than that it should be voluntarily resigned and prostituted to unworthy purposes.

* Ch. i. sect. ii. p. 18; and sect. iii. p. 57.

SECTION VI.

If miracles may be performed without a divine interposition, and in support of falsehood, they cannot be authentic credentials of a divine mission, and criterions of truth.

IT is a thing too obvious to require any laboured argument, that if miracles, in themselves, are evidences only of the interposition of some superior beings, not of God more than any other, they can never be, in themselves, a certain criterion of a person's being sent of God. "You could not know I came from, and was sent by, such a prince, by my bringing his seal along with me, if other people had the same seal, and would lend it to others to use as they saw fit*." If you cannot point out, with clearness and certainty, the specific difference between those miracles which are peculiar to God, and those which the devil can either perform or imitate, you will be in perpetual danger of mistaking the one for the other†. Accordingly we find Christians themselves, from the earliest ages down to the present, disparaging the evidence of mere miracles, as doubtful and uncertain; cautioning the world against receiving doctrines as true and di-

* Fleetwood's Essay on Miracles, p. 6, 7.

† Dr. Prideaux in his Letter to the Deists, p. 206, and many others, have undertaken to shew what sort of miracles the devil may perform or imitate. The task however seems to have been too hard for them; which it might well be, if it be true, as Dr. Clarke and others tell us, that there is no knowing how far the power of created spirits, good and evil, may extend. Why then do these writers undertake to determine the limits of their power? See Dr. Clarke, vol. ii. p. 696, &c.

vine,

vine, upon the bare attestation of these works, and censuring a faith founded upon them as manifestly *rash and groundless**. Can it then be matter of surprise to us, that unbelievers should treat miracles with very little reverence, and except to the evidence arising from them? It has long provoked their scorn and indignation, to have that offered them as a valid proof of the truth, which equally attests falsehood; to see the very same works used to recommend some to their regard as divine messengers, and to disgrace others as magicians†. For, I think, there is hardly a single miracle, either in the Old or New Testament, which Christians have not thought they could parallel‡ with some similar miracle among the Pagans. There are two cases, however, in which miracles are considered

* Temerariam plane. Tertullian. in Marc. iii. 2. Origen, in his Answer to Celsus, l. iii. p. 124, speaks of prophecies and supernatural cures, as things of an indifferent nature. And Jerome, or whoever is the author of the Breviary upon the Psalter, apud Hieron. t. ii 334, 335, makes no difficulty of allowing to Porphyry, that the magicians of Egypt, Apollonius and an infinite number of other persons, wrought miracles. "Non est autem grande facere signa," seems to have been the principle common both to Porphyry and Jerome.

† It was this which afforded Celsus such matter of insult and triumph: Πως ουν αν τις σχοιτλιον, απο των αυτων εργων τον μεν Θεον, τους δε γοητας ηγεισθαι. Celsus apud Origen. contra Cels. l. ii. p. 93. This it is that seems to have created the strongest prejudice in M. Rousseau against miracles. "Can it be imagined," says he, "that God uses the same means to instruct men, as he knows the devil will use to deceive them?" Lettres écrites de la Montagne, p. 104.

‡ This task was undertaken by the learned Huetius, in his Quæstiones Alnetanæ.

as evidences of a divine mission, by some who plead that such works may, on other occasions, be performed without the order of God.

I. It is urged, "that in case of a contest between two opposite parties working miracles for victory, the party which works the *most* and *greatest* miracles may reasonably be supposed to be assisted by God; and therefore that his doctrine should be received as divine." To this we answer, 1*st*, That if supernatural operations were brought to support opposite missions, it would be difficult to determine which of them required the greater degrees of power. Scarce, perhaps, would any two persons pronounce the same judgment concerning them. *The driving the traders out of the temple* is called by St. Jerome* *the most wonderful of all the miracles which Jesus performed:* and yet a very learned modern† scarce allows it to be any miracle at all. To change the *form of a creature* is pronounced by Dr. Lightfoot‡ the *greatest* miracle; and he applies the observation to that wrought at Cana: but Dr. Lardner§ calls it "one of the *least* miracles any where ascribed to Christ." How can miracles of a *different kind* be brought into a comparison with each other? Were this difficulty overcome, there still remains a greater. For, 2*dly*, It would be impossible to shew, on the principles we are here examining, that those miracles which carried marks of a *superior*

* In Matt. tom. ix. p. 31, ed. Bas. 1516.

† The Miracles of Jesus vindicated, by Dr. Pearce, p. 26.

‡ Vol. i. p. 504.

§ Vindication, p. 26.

power were really *divine*. The most learned Dr. Clarke seems indeed to have thought*, that where *superior* power appeared, "there it was *necessarily* to be believed that the commission was truly from God:" and the ingenious and acute bishop Sherlock affirms†, "that miracles are an immediate and direct proof of what they are brought to assert, the supremacy of God: for, when the single question is, who is the Mightiest, must it not be decided in his favour who visibly exerts the greatest acts of power?" But if created spirits of very different ranks and orders are at liberty to work miracles without any commission from God, who can determine the limits of their respective capacities, and take upon him to say how far the power of the highest created spirit may extend? Dr. Clarke tells us‡, "that (unless we knew the limit of *communicable* and *incommunicable* power) we can hardly affirm with any certainty, that *any* particular effect, *how great* or *miraculous soever* it may seem to us, is beyond the power of all created beings in the universe to have produced." I admit, that in case of such a contest as is supposed above, the party which performs the most and greatest miracles is *superior* to the opposite. But I am not able to discern how this *superiority* of the one to the other necessarily proves an *infinity* of power, or an absolute *supremacy* over all other beings. On the principles of Dr. Clarke, the miracles on both sides, separately considered, *might* be performed by beings inferior to

* Sermons, vol. ii. p. 700. † Discourses, vol. i. p 285.
‡ Vol. ii. p. 697.

God,

d, and are proofs only of the interposition of some isible agents superior to man: how then can the cumstance of their being performed in a contest victory demonstrate that they could have no other hor than God? *3dly*. On the contrary, this cirnstance would incline us to believe that *both* parties re assisted only by created intelligences superior to : another in power; for it seems much more likely, t there should be a contention for power and supreey between different created agents, than between creature and his omnipotent Creator. With whom uld the Almighty maker and sovereign of the unise deign to enter into a contest? And superior nts (as Dr. Clarke* himself allows) "could not sibly be so absurdly ignorant, as to imagine that te could prevail by *force* against infinite, or not know t the Almighty could, if he pleased, annihilate them ft as thought." From hence it seems to me to fol-, that, if opposite missions were supported by mi-les, the supreme Being could have no concern in dispute. *4thly*. According to the rule of judging cerning the divinity of miracles, here laid down, se works will, at different times, both prove and prove the divine commission of their performer. ile the contest is continued between two opposite ties working miracles for victory, he who to-day, working more and greater miracles than his rival, is ived as a divine messenger, must be rejected as impostor to-morrow, if his rival should then ex-him in the number and greatness of his miracles.

* Sermons, vol. i. p. 60, folio edition, and p. 587.

At the next trial, however, he may exceed his rival, recover the advantage he lost, and, from being an impostor, become again a divine messenger. How long the contest may last, none can tell; but every one may see that there can be no force in that proof which alternately establishes and destroys opposite claims. In such a supposed contest, each of the miracles, in itself considered, is of no value: and add as many of these ciphers together as you please, they will be but ciphers still.

II. Those Christians* who are of opinion that miracles may be wrought by inferior beings, do nevertheless ascribe such to God as are performed for an end not unworthy of him. "Though the works," say they, "do necessarily prove nothing more than the interposition of some superior being, yet the nature of the *doctrine* will enable us to determine who that being is: and if the doctrine has a tendency to promote piety and virtue, or be only indifferent in itself, and not absolutely inconsistent with these ends; then the miracles, and consequently the doctrine, must be divine: for, should God in such cases as these permit evil spirits to work miracles to impose upon men, the error would be absolutely invincible; and that would in all respects be the very same thing as if God worked the miracles to deceive men himself." This reasoning seems liable to several objections. Why should the mere *indifference* of the doctrine engage us to ascribe the miracles to God, rather than to other superior spirits supposed capable of performing them? Is it not

* Dr. Clarke, vol. ii. p. 700; Dr. Chandler, and others.

more

more honourable to the Deity to suppose that he will not attest a doctrine merely indifferent in itself? It is what his wisdom will not permit. With regard to doctrines of a *moral or useful tendency;* it is not in all cases easy for the bulk of mankind, or even for the wise and learned, to form a certain judgment concerning them. What to men appeared to have a tendency to promote virtue and happiness, superior beings, who discerned its remotest effects, might know to be a curse rather than a blessing, and give it countenance from a motive of malevolence. On the other hand, a doctrine really subservient to the cause of piety and virtue, men might judge to be prejudicial to it. And were the sanctity of the doctrine ever so evident, it would not (on the principles of those with whom we are here arguing) certainly follow from hence, that the miracles recommending it were wrought by God; inasmuch as other beings, from motives unknown to us, might interest themselves in favour of such a doctrine. Concerning none but the divine Being can it be demonstrated, that he is absolutely incapable of deceiving or being deceived. Nor is there any reason to plead, "that if miracles were performed by evil spirits in support of a doctrine good or innocent, mankind would be *necessarily* deluded into a belief of its divine original:" unless it be allowed that miracles bear upon themselves evident and certain characters of divinity. But those who make this plea suppose it to be a thing known and certain, that no miracles whatever do necessarily argue a divine interposition. Were I to see miracles performed in

favour

favour of all sorts of doctrines, I would not ascribe any of them to God; I should be unable to persuade myself that infinite wisdom employed any works as the distinguishing test of its own extraordinary interposition, which may be performed by inferior beings; or that the Deity would use that as a seal of truth, which the devil uses to gain credit to imposture. And therefore, if miracles may be performed by created agents of different and opposite characters, and in support of falsehood as well as truth, I am not able to perceive how any doctrine can be proved by miracles *, or at least any such doctrine as wants the attestation of these works.

It is necessary to observe farther, that the making the doctrine the test of the divinity of the miracles is to make the doctrine the rule of judging concerning the miracle, not the miracle the rule of judging concerning the doctrine. The proper and immediate design of miracles is to establish some truth unknown before, and such as is not demonstrable by reason, or

* In confirmation of what is urged above to shew that, on the principle maintained in the objection we are now examining, no doctrine whatever can be proved to come from God by miracles, it may be observed, that if the doctrine be such as natural reason can clearly and certainly discover to be *true*, the miracles are unnecessary and superfluous, and for that reason cannot be divine. And if the doctrine be such as reason can clearly prove to be *false*, it will be still more impossible to ascribe the miracles to God. If the doctrine be *doubtful*, and natural reason be unable to determine whether it be true or false, it must be equally doubtful who the author of the miracles is. But it is sufficient to have shewn that, if miracles are not peculiar to God, no doctrine that wants the attestation of these works *can be proved* by them.

capable

capable of other evidence besides that of miracles; to prove, for example, the mission of the prophet by whom they are performed, and the divine original of his message or doctrine, and to engage men to receive and comply with it, however contrary it may be to their prejudices and passions. But according to some learned men, the doctrine must first be examined without passion or prejudice, and then employed to prove the divinity of the miracles. But is not this repugnant to the proper use and intention of miracles? It is making the whole force of the proof to depend upon the doctrine to be proved. It is of importance to add, that miracles are intended more especially for the conviction of the ignorant and unlearned, who are easily imposed upon by the sophistry of science, and the specious disguises of error, as well as utterly disqualified to determine by abstract reasonings concerning the absolute necessity, or the fitness and propriety, of special divine interpositions. It is necessary therefore that miracles, when they are offered as evidences of a divine commission, should contain in their own nature a clear demonstrative proof of their divine original; for otherwise their special design could not be answered. It is quite unnatural to suppose that the doctrine must first establish the divinity of the miracles, before the miracles can attest the divinity of the doctrine; and it is absurd to expect that a new revelation and offensive truths (which are not received without reluctance even where there is a prior conviction of the divinity of the miracles attesting them) should themselves effectually engage men to

ascribe those works to God, which might be performed by numberless other invisible agents.

Now, can it be imagined that God will ever allow superior beings to work miracles in support of falsehood, if hereby he would destroy the proof from these works of his own immediate interposition, and put it out of his own power to employ them as certain credentials of a divine mission? Miracles (under which term I comprehend those of *knowledge* as well as *power*) being the *only** mean whereby God can assure the world of the truth of a new revelation, he must have reserved the use of it to himself alone, without ever parting with it to serve the purposes of his rivals and opposers.

With regard to the rule of making miracles then a proof of the divine original of the doctrine, when the works display a *superiority* of power, and when the doctrine is either subservient to, or not inconsistent with, piety and virtue; it may be farther observed, that, were this rule true in general, it could not be applied to the case either of Judaism or Christianity; if it should appear that the great founders of both those religions have established rules directly opposite to this, and represented miracles as *absolute*, not as *conditional*, proofs of a doctrine's coming from God. And this is the point which comes next under consideration.

But before we proceed farther, it may not be improper to recapitulate what has been already offered from reason, to shew that miracles can never be per-

* See below, ch. v.

formed

formed without a divine interposition. Reason, it has been observed, makes known to us but one almighty Being, who is at liberty to act every where, and in what manner he pleases, and whose omnipotence is the only adequate cause we are capable of discovering, in the whole compass of existence, of those effects which are called miraculous. To him therefore it is most natural to ascribe them. The best arguments which reason can employ, to prove the existence of superior created intelligences, do much more strongly prove that they can act only within that particular sphere appointed them by their Creator. It has likewise been shewn, that the observation and experience of all ages are a full demonstration that they are not at liberty to perform miracles in this lower world; no such works having ever been performed in it but such as may fitly be ascribed to God. The laws of nature being the established rules of the divine government, and essential to the order and happiness of the world, it seems very unreasonable to suppose that God should delegate to any of his creatures a power of superseding or controlling these laws. Miracles are samples of dominion over them, and argue the immediate interposition and authority of that great Being by whom they were at first ordained. Deists more especially, who deny the existence both of angels and devils, must allow that, if any miracles are performed, they can have none but God for their author, and that the settled course of things is unalterable but by his immediate will. Were inferior beings at liberty to disturb the wise order of nature, we should lose our best evidence

of God's existence and providence; and the very foundation of all the homage he claims would be overturned. The opinion we are here opposing has in all ages been fatal to true piety, and given birth to endless superstitions and idolatries. And did superior beings really possess the miraculous powers ascribed to them, the exercise of those powers by good and evil agents would either expose mankind to necessary and invincible error, or entirely destroy the credit and use of miracles under the idea of criterions of truth, and authentic credentials of a divine mission.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER III.

Arguments from REVELATION, *to prove that Miracles are, in themselves, certain Evidences of a divine Interposition.*

IT is necessary on this occasion to appeal to the sacred writings; not merely for the conviction of those who acknowledge their divine authority, though they mistake the meaning of many passages relative to our present inquiry, but also to convince those who, denying their authority, are ready to avail themselves of the misinterpretations of the former, in subverting the foundation on which their authority rests. I will endeavour to shew that the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament (strictly corresponding with right reason) always represent miracles as the peculiar works of God; and never attribute them to any other beings, unless when acting by his immediate commission. The subject must be considered in its full extent, and comprehends under it the following topics, which demand a close and candid examination.

SECTION I.

The view which the Scripture gives us of good angels, of the devil and his angels, as also of the souls of departed men, inconsistent with their liberty of working miracles.

I. WITH regard to *good angels;* the Scripture never represents them as capable of working miracles at their own pleasure, or as invested with any dominion

over

over mankind. Very frequent mention indeed is made of angels, either as the instruments or symbols of an extraordinary providence. When Jacob* in a dream saw a ladder, reaching from earth to heaven, on which the angels of God seemed to ascend and descend, and on the top of which the divine glory itself appeared; this vision, perhaps, was designed only as a symbol or figurative representation of God's special care of Jacob, and readiness to interpose at all times for his protection. It is in allusion to this vision that our Saviour expresses himself when he foretold to Nathaniel that surprising train of miracles which attended his ministry†: *From this time‡ you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man.* Now inasmuch as the miracles of Christ are elsewhere ascribed, not to angels, but to God§, the former cannot be regarded as the proper authors of these works; and our Saviour might mean only to affirm, that his miracles would be sensible displays of the divine power in his favour, or open proofs of an immediate intercourse between heaven and earth. We do not however deny that Christ might employ angels in executing his orders, and particularly in working miracles: for they are all made subject to him. Ne-

*Gen. xxviii. 12.

† John i. 51. That Christ here foretells his miracles, and not the visible ascent and descent of angels upon him during his ministry, is evident from hence, that the prophecy was not accomplished in this latter sense of it.

‡ Απ' αρτι.

§ See below, sect. vi.

vertheless,

ertheless, it does not appear from the Scriptures that ıey can perform miracles of themselves, and with-ut an immediate divine commission. On the con-ary, according to the Scripture account of them, if ıey bring any messages to men, they first receive ıem from God; if they control the course of nature, is by authority from the Lord of nature; and if they ıterpose at all in the affairs of our system, it is not as hey see fit themselves, but according to the com-ıand of God, as the ministers of his will, which hey execute as punctually as those passive instruments f his providence, the luminaries of heaven, and the lements of nature*. The word *angel* or *messenger* enotes only one employed in the execution of some ommission. Hence it is applied not merely to intel-igent beings acting by the order of God, but even o the inanimate parts of the creation, which he em-loys as the instruments of his government. The salmist, when celebrating the empire of God over he *material* world, says, *He maketh the winds his an-els or messengers, and lightnings his ministers*†. *For*

*Ps. xviii. 9, 10. Ps. lxviii. 17. Ps. ciii. 20, 21. Is. vi. 1, &c.)an. vii. 9. Matt. xviii. 10. Heb. i. 14. ch. ii. 5. Rev. v. 13. h. vii. 11. ch. xix. 10.

†This is the true rendering of Ps. civ. 4. (compare Exod. ix. 23, 4. Ps. lxxviii. 48, 49.) Nor is it certain that these words are applied leb. i. 7. to intelligent beings; as the apostle seems to have had no ther view in citing them, than to observe, that the very name of *ngels* (however applied) imported *ministry* and *subjection*; whereas hat of *Son* implied *authority* and *dominion*. Very probably the Scrip-ure may represent the most active parts of nature as God's angels, n opposition to the Heathens, who conceived of them as deities. ee below, ch. iii. sect. ii.

fire

*fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy winds fulfil God's word**. But all that it is of importance here to observe, is, that the Scripture teaches us, that angels, of whatever dignity, are only *ministering spirits*, the servants of Jehovah, *doing his commandments, and hearkening to the voice of his word*, without having themselves any power over mankind, or over those laws by which the system to which we belong is governed.

II. We are next to inquire, whether the Scripture ascribes the power of performing miracles to *the devil and his angels*. It is generally supposed that these wicked spirits were originally inhabitants of the ce-

*Ps. cxlviii. 8. According to this general import of the word *angel*, many learned writers understand it in the following and other passages of Scripture. *The angel of the Lord smiting Herod*, they think is explained in the text itself of an *extraordinary distemper* inflicted by God, Acts xii. 23. God threatened Sennacherib, *that he would send a blast upon him*, a pestilential blast or burning wind, which destroyed his army; and this being done under the direction of God, and in execution of his designs, the blast or wind is called the *angel*, the messenger and servant of God, 2 Kings xii. 6, 7. ch. xix. 35. *God's sending an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it*, seems only another form of expression for *his sending a pestilence upon Israel*, 1 Chron. xxi. 14, 15. 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16. We read Exod. ix. 23, 24, that the Lord *sent upon the Egyptians thunder and hail and fire*: and the Psalmist, speaking of these judgments, says, *God sent evil angels amongst them*, Ps. lxxviii. 48, 49. See Mr. Lowman's three Tracts, p. 60—74. On the other hand, it may be alleged that the sacred writers seem to have thought that God administered *a particular providence* by the instrumentality of his angels; and consequently, in describing the effects of a special divine interposition, would very naturally make mention of the agency of those ministering spirits, much in the same manner as is done in the passages here cited.

lestial regions, and equal in rank and dignity with those who preserved their innocence. Now, supposing this to be the case; yet if even good angels, who continue in a state of favour with God, have no power of working miracles at their own pleasure, or any dominion over mankind, (as we endeavoured to shew under the preceding article;) what reason can there be for ascribing such dominion and power to evil angels, who are fallen under the divine displeasure? Would the Deity, unchangeable as he is in rectitude and justice, reward their disobedience by enlarging their sphere of action, and advancing them to new dominion over his own creation, such as is denied to the highest archangel? Is the latter only *a ministring spirit*, while the former reign as sovereigns over nature, as fellow-sovereigns with the eternal God? The apostles* Peter and Jude speak a very different language, when they tell us, that inasmuch as the angels *did not keep their principality* †, *but deserted their own habitation, God did not spare them, but cast them down to Tartarus* ‡, and (there) *reserves them in everlasting* (or *perpetual*) *chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day*. If Peter and Jude are here speaking of superior spirits, it is evident that even prior to their fall they did not enjoy the liberty of a boundless range, but had a certain limited sphere of action assigned them, or their *proper habitation:* which we have shewn to be highly probable from reason §. And in

* 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6.

† Την ἑαυτων αρχην, Jude 6.

‡ Ταρταρωσας. § Ch. ii. sect. i.

their

their present state they are subjected to new restraints, like prisoners confined for their crimes in a doleful dungeon, where they remain in safe custody till they are brought forth to an ignominious execution. The place of their confinement is called *Tartarus;* by which some understand *a deep gulph under the earth**, and others the *dark air*† near the earth: but whatever place it refers to, they can have no *dominion* there; it is not their *kingdom*, but their *prison*, their *constant* and *perpetual* prison. How inconsistent is this representation of their case, with their sharing with God the empire of the world, and controlling the laws of nature and providence! Nor does the Scripture on any occasion contradict this representation: it never ascribes to the devil the ability of revealing secrets, foretelling future events, or working miracles; never guards mankind against being deceived by the outward effects either of his miraculous power or inspiration; necessary as such a caution would have been, had he been able to inspire prophecies and work miracles; and earnestly as it warns us against a less danger, the pretences of men to divine miracles and inspiration, when they were not sent and assisted by God.

It is indeed urged by some‡, that the Scripture represents evil spirits as *presiding over distinct regions*,

* This seems to be the strict import of the word, Homer. Il. viii. l. 13, 14. Hesiod. Theogon. l. 119, 718. Plato in Phædone, p. 399, ed. Ficini. Virgil. Æn. vi. l. 577.

† Consult the commentators on 2 Peter ii. 4. Ephes. ii. 2. ch vi. 12.

‡ Dr. Doddridge's Family Expositor, vol. i. p. 427, second edition, note f on Luke viii. 31.

by

by the direction of Satan their prince. In proof of this assertion, we are referred to that passage in the book of Daniel* where mention is made of Gabriel's being opposed by the princes of the kingdom of Persia, and of his fighting the prince of Persia. It is not the design of this vision to assert the presidency even of good angels, (who at most only execute the divine orders,) but to represent *the peculiar providence* which God exercised over the Jewish nation, and his care to frustrate the councils of their enemies. As to evil spirits, there is here no reference to them. For by the princes of the kingdom of Persia the prophet intends the nobles of that kingdom, and especially Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, who in his father's absence stopped the execution of his decrees, and forbade the building of the temple†. It is the more reasonable to understand this passage of some opposition against the Jews in the court of Persia by the prince and some of the nobility, inasmuch as the prince of Grecia mentioned in the very same passage cannot so well be referred to an angel or evil spirit as to Alexander the Great, who overturned the empire of Persia; he and his successors being the main subject of the following prophecy.

Some learned writers ascribe to the devil a power *of changing the constitution of the air*‡. This element "is so wonderfully contrived as at one and the same time to support clouds for rain, to afford winds

* Ch. x. 13, 20.

† See the Assembly's Annotations in loc.

‡ Dr. Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History, p. 173.

for health and traffic, to be proper for the breath of animals by its spring, for causing sounds by its motion, for transmitting light by its transparency*." And therefore, if the devil can change the constitution of this element, on which the material, the vegetable, and the animal creation absolutely depend, this world is in a state of perfect subjection to him; and instead of being a prisoner in Tartarus, he is the sovereign of nature. It has been a prevailing opinion amongst Christians, that the devil raises storms, and lays them; in direct contradiction to the sacred Scriptures, which represent the winds and waves as subject to the control of God alone†, and every change of their natural state as the certain evidence of his peculiar interposition, particularly the miraculous storm of thunder and hail in Egypt‡, the dividing the red sea by the rod of Moses §, and Christ's calming the winds and waves upon the lake of Gennesaret ‖. God interposes to control the elements very rarely, and only on great and extraordinary occasions: can we then believe that the devil, and sorcerers by his assistance, control them at pleasure every day? So strange a doctrine requires some clearer proof than the mention made by St. Paul of *the prince of the power of the air* ⸸. It is evident in general that the apostle is describing not the *natural* but *moral* state of the world.

* Dr. Clarke's Sermons, vol. i. p. 5.

† See Ps. lxv. 7. Ps. cxxxv. 7. Ps. cxlvii. 18. Prov. xxx. 4. Is. xxvii. 8. Jerem. x. 13. Amos iv. 13. Job xxxvii. 10, 11.

‡ Exod. ix. 27—29. Compare Is. xi. 15.

§ Exod. xiv. 15. ‖ Mark iv. 41. Mat. xiv. 33. ⸸ Ephes. ii. 2.

Who

Who the person here referred to is, there may be some difficulty to determine. If St. Paul refers to *the prince of the Heathen deities*, who were thought to have their station in the higher regions of the air *; he could not allow their having any real dominion over the aërial regions, and must be understood as reproaching the gross stupidity of idolaters, in being as strongly actuated by their regard to these idols as if they had been powerful divinities. The very scope and design of this passage, as well as the principles which the apostle avows on other occasions, are sufficient to convince us, that he could only intend to describe the Heathen deities by their usual appellations, without allowing their claims. Suppose the apostle, to make the Ephesians ashamed of their former debaucheries, had reproached them with having been the votaries of the god Bacchus or the goddess Venus, who would have inferred from this language that he believed Venus or Bacchus to be powerful divinities? Our Saviour himself uses language similar to this, when he speaks of men's *serving Mammon*, the god of riches. If (as is more generally and probably supposed) St. Paul refers to *the devil*, or any spirit notorious for his disaffection to God, and for having seduced others from their allegiance; he designed to upbraid the world with following such a leader and example, who was considered by the Jews

* See Whitby on Ephes. ii. 2. with whom compare Fabricius on Sextus Empiricus, note F, p. 571, and Dr. Harwood's Introduction to the New Testament, p. 303.

as

as the prince or chief of all those wicked spirits who were believed to have their residence in the air *. The apostle is here reminding the Ephesians of their character and state before their conversion to the Christian faith: *In time past ye walked according* † *to the course of this world,* (in conformity to the manners and idolatries of the Heathen world,) *according* † *to* (or after the example of) *the prince of the power of the air,* even the prince *of the spirit* ‡ (or *disposition* and *temper*) *that now worketh in the children of disobedience,* or in those who have not been persuaded to embrace the Gospel. The apostle is not here excusing idolatry, from the consideration of men's being urged to commit it by a supernatural power, but aggravating its guilt and sottishness, from the consideration of its conformity to the most odious character, to the example of *the prince of the power of the air,* even *the*

* The Jews had adopted the notion of the Heathens, that the air was inhabited by *evil spirits.* See Whitby on Ephes. ii. 2. And to this notion the apostle seems to refer, when he speaks of *the prince of the power of the air,* or the prince of the aërial power; describing him in this manner, because it was his usual appellation, and because he really was the ringleader and chief of those wicked spirits who were commonly considered as inhabitants of the air.

† Κατα.

‡ Instead of *the spirit,* the original (του πνευματος) ought to be rendered *of the spirit;* which Dr. Doddridge well explains by *disposition* and *temper.* And that the word *spirit* does often bear this sense, is evident from Ps. li. 10. Luke ix. 55. Rom. viii. 15. 2 Tim. i. 7. and other places. It must bear this sense here; for if by *the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience* you understand the devil, who is *the prince* of that spirit after whose example the Ephesians had walked?

prince,

prince, captain and leader of *that temper** or spirit of disaffection to God, which still actuates and governs the unconverted Heathens.

III. We proceed to consider the view which the Scripture gives us of the *souls of departed men*.

Many eminent writers maintain, that men sink at death into a state of total insensibility till the general resurrection. But we will not avail ourselves of this opinion; being persuaded that the souls of men, though formed with a great dependence upon the body with regard to the exercise of all their faculties, are nevertheless separable from it, and do (by the appointment of God, on which it must depend) exist in a state of conscious reflection when actually separated from it. In this state, however, the soul can have no intercourse with the present world. It is the body alone which links us to the world, and the organs of it are the necessary and only means both of our receiving any notices and impressions from outward objects, and of our exercising any dominion over them. And consequently when this animal system, with all its wonderful powers of sensation and activity, is dissolved by death, the soul can have no communi-

* The same manner of speaking is used, Micah i. 13. where Lachish is called in the Septuagint, αρχηγος αμαρτιας, the *prince* or *ringleader of sin*; for this city set Judah an *example* of idolatry. And in Maccab. ix. 61. mention is made των αρχηγων της κακιας, *of the leaders of that mischief*, or the *chief* in it. The same manner of speaking was familiar with the Latins: Vestri pulcherrimi facti ille furiosus me principem dicit fuisse. Cicer. Ep. Princeps atque architectus sceleris. Id. Princeps sceleris atque concitator belli, Hirt. ap. Cæs. B. G. viii. 38.

cation

cation with the material creation. To renew this communication, it must again be united to an organized body. This seems to me most agreeable to reason*, and is unquestionably the sense of divine revelation. Can less than this be implied in those passages of Scripture which represent death, and the state to which it reduces us, *by sleep*†, in which the organs of the body are bound up; and even by *a negation of* (corporeal) *life and action*‡? The sacred writers constantly affirm that the dead *know not any thing* § which concerns the present world; that they are strangers to the affairs of their nearest relatives ‖; (*Abraham being ignorant of his own descendants, and Israel acknowledging them not* ↓, neither acquainted with their sufferings, nor capable of affording them any relief:) and in a word, that there is *no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave***. In this state the most eminent *saints* remain till the general resurrection; for David is not yet *ascended into the heavens* ††. Much less are the souls of *wicked* men advanced to dignity and power. St. Peter calls those who were formerly disobedient in the days of Noah, *spirits in prison* ‡‡; and our Saviour expressly teaches that the

* See above, ch. ii. sec. i.

† Deut. xxxi. 16. Job iii. 13. Psalm lxxvi. 5. Dan. xii. 2.

‡ Job iii. 11, 16. Ps. xxx. 9. Ps. lxxxviii. 10, 12. Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

§ Eccles. ix. 6.

‖ *His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.* Job xiv. 21.

↓ Isaiah lxiii. 16.

** Eccles. vi. 10.

†† Acts ii. 4.

‡‡ 1 Pet. iii. 19.

souls

souls of the dead are in a state where they can have, of themselves, no possible intercourse* with the living; and that they are never released from it by God; no not for so important a purpose as that of persuading their vicious relatives to reclaim their lives; and consequently not for any lower end.

Notwithstanding these several passages of Scripture, and the general idea which it gives us of death, as a punishment for sin, from which we are delivered by a proper resurrection †, are well calculated to subvert the foundation of Pagan superstition and idolatry; yet, from too strong a relish of both, the *Fathers* of the Christian Church (as they are styled by their true *sons*, who inherit their principles and dispositions) adopted the wild fictions of the Heathen priests and

* *Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.* Luke xvi. 26, 31.

† The word αναστασις is διστερα στασις, *restoration.* Suidas in voc. Death destroys our peculiar and distinguishing nature, as beings compounded of matter and spirit; yet it does not destroy the substance either of the material or spiritual part of our composition. The resurrection of the dead consists in their *restoration* to that kind of life which they formerly enjoyed, and which they lost by death, or in *a return* to their former state. In the age of the Gospel, all who believed a resurrection, or any future state of retribution, believed the permanency of the human soul after death; and all who rejected the latter denied the former. This was the case particularly with respect to the Pharisees and Sadducees amongst the Jews. See Acts xxiii. 8. and the History of Josephus. So that our Saviour, by asserting the resurrection, would be understood rather to assert than deny an intermediate state.

philosophers

philosophers concerning the state of the dead*; and like them maintained, that the souls of the deceased have some sense and knowledge of what is doing here†; that they are clothed with *subtle bodies*, in which they frequently appear to mankind ‡; and that persons of eminent virtue become after death a kind

* Even in the age of the apostles, some professing Christians denied the resurrection of the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 12. or said it was *passed already*, 2 Tim. ii. 18. Having been taught by the Heathen philosophers to look upon the body as the prison of the soul, and upon death as the means of its liberty and enlargement; they pronounced the resurrection of the dead to be equally undesirable and impossible, and interpreted what Christ and his apostles declared concerning it, of a renovation to a life of holiness from a state of sin, described as a state of death. See Whitby on 1 Cor. xv. 35, and compare Peters on Job, p. 403. And because some of the antient philosophers had taught that the souls of illustrious personages ascended, immediately after death, into the celestial regions, many Christians maintained that the *martyrs* (and they only) enjoyed the same privilege.

† Plato, Ep. 2. says, εστι τις αισθησις τοις τεθνηκοσι των σωμα.

‡ The Jews also had imbibed this Pagan principle: for the disciples were *terrified* at the first appearance of Christ after his resurrection, and *supposed that they had seen a spirit*, Luke xxiv. 37. It is observable, that our Saviour, in his reply, neither countenances nor controverts the opinion, that ghosts can render themselves visible to human sight, and that in their pristine form; but contents himself with arguing on their own principles, in order to convince them of the truth of his resurrection; *q. d.* "If you will feel and handle my body, you will soon perceive, from the solidity of it, that I am not a mere ghost, which you conceive of as presenting itself to the eye, and yet eluding the grasp of the hand; but a real man, raised from the dead in the very same body, compounded of flesh and bones, in which I suffered death."

In

of inferior deities, whose images and sepulchres ought to be honoured and adored.

In order to justify the worship of deified or beatified souls, they forged innumerable miracles, pretending them to be wrought by apparitions of the saints in dreams, by their intercession, by the touch of their sepulchres, their bones or other relics. Sir Isaac Newton * has shewn this concerning the Fathers in the East; and the same is equally true concerning those in the West. To guard all honest minds against so dangerous an imposture, it pleased God to foretell it, and to brand the authors and supporters of it with the characters they so well deserve, that of *apostates from genuine Christianity*, while they retained the outward profession of it, and *profligate venders of lies*. *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart* † *from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines concerning dæmons* ‡, (the

* Observations on Daniel, ch. xiv.

† This *apostacy* or *revolt* from the Christian faith refers to the corruption of it by the introduction of an *idolatrous worship*; as is shewn by the eminently learned Mr. Joseph Mede, Works, p. 625, ed. 4th.

‡ Διδασκαλιαις δαιμονιων, *doctrines concerning dæmons*. Compare Heb. vi. 2. Acts xiii. 12. Jerem. x. 8. in the LXX. and Mede, p. 626. St. Paul here specifies the idolatrous worship which would prevail amongst Christians, which is that of dæmons, deified human spirits. See Rev. ix. 20. and below, ch. iii. sect. ii. By dæmons it is impossible here to understand *devils* (in the common acceptation of that word), because the Christian church, notwithstanding its dreadful degeneracy in many other instances, never defiled itself with the worship of devils. In Epiphanius (adver. Hær. lxxviii. p. 1055, tom. i. ed. Petav.) there is a clause added to the forecited passage from St. Paul, which at least serves to explain it, and which

(the souls of men deified after death,) *through the hypocrisy* (or *feigning*) *of liars**, (who will support their own erroneous doctrine concerning the divinity and worship of dead men, by false miracles and other legendary tales, and whom therefore Christians ought to detest as persons) *having their conscience seared with a hot iron*†. Thus the sacred Scriptures both give us such a representation of the state of the dead as is inconsistent with their possessing a miraculous power, and resolve the whole history of their intercourse with mankind into the falsehood of its compilers; notwithstanding, under various pretences, (such as *forbidding to marry*, and *commanding to abstain from meat*‡,) they have assumed a claim to extraordinary sanctity.

SECTION II.

The Scripture representation of the nature and claims of the Heathen gods considered.

THE gods of the Heathens taken notice of in Scripture are of two different kinds: the world, together with all its constituent parts and principles; and dæmons.

which seems to have been a part of the original text, *for they shall be worshippers of the dead, as in Israel also they were worshipped*, that is, when the Israelites fell into the Heathen idolatry. See Mills and Beza in loc. and Mann's Critical Notes on some Passages of Scripture, p. 92.

* Εν ὑποκρισει ψευδολογων.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 3.

1. The

1. The Heathens deified the world, together with all its constituent parts and powers. Conceiving the world to be pervaded and animated * by a vital and intelligent substance, they regarded it as a divinity †, which contained, framed and governed all things. The world possessing animal life and intelligence, they concluded the same concerning the several portions of it, especially its most illustrious parts and active principles, the elements, the heavens and all their host, the winds also, and whatever other beings partook of a similar substance; and considered them all as so many distinct deities. The sentient nature and divinity of the sun, moon and stars more especially,

* Principio cælum, ac terras, camposque liquentes,
Lucentemque globum Lunæ, Titaniaque astra,
Spiritus intus alit; totamque infusa per artus
Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.
Virg. Æn. l. vi. ver. 724.

Vide etiam Virg. Georg. l. iv. ver. 221. & Plutarch. de Placitis Philosoph. l. ii. c. iii. p. 886.

† Nec magis approbabit nunc lucere, quàm, quoniam Stoicus est, hunc mundum esse sapientem, habere mentem, quæ et se et ipsum fabricata sit, et omnia moderetur, moveat, regat. Cicer. Acad. Q. l. ii. c. 37. Nihil mundo perfectius,—sapiens est et propterea deus. Id. de Nat. Deor. l. ii. c. 14. Omnium rerum parens est mundus. c. 34. The Platonists indeed sometimes spoke of the world as only a secondary and begotten god (as we learn from Origen contr. Cels. l. v. p. 235 and Plato's Tim. p. 1049, E, F. 1090, A.): but the doctrine of the Stoics, which represented the world as the chief god, (Diogen. Laë. t. l. vii. segm. 137, 146. Plutarch. de Placit Philosoph. l. i. c. 7. and Senec. Ep. 94.) was more conformable to the common creed of the Pagans.

was

was strenuously asserted by the philosophers *, as well as believed by the common people, and was indeed the very foundation of the Pagan idolatry. This point was allowed by all except atheists †, or those who were reputed such. Anaxagoras, though he maintained the existence of an infinite mind, and its efficiency in the formation of the universe, was nevertheless accused of atheism and impiety, for teaching that the heavenly bodies were inanimate and unintelligent beings, and the sun itself a mass of inflamed matter. Thus it came to pass that the Pagan nations lost sight of the argument from the admirable contrivance of the natural world in favour of the existence of the true God, the original cause of all things. Balbus the Stoic, in Cicero's second book concerning the nature of the gods, discourses admirably on the order and harmony of the universe, and the use and beauty of the parts that compose it: but what is the inference he draws from these premises? *That the world was a god, and the habitation of the gods* ‡, and that it was governed by *the providence of the gods* §. These were the first deities of all the idolatrous nations, and were

* Particularly by Pythagoras and his followers, (as we learn from Diogen. Laërt. l. viii. p. 509.) and by the Stoics. Thus Balbus expresses himself, (in Cicer. de Nat. Deor. l. ii. c. 15.) Atque hac mundi divinitate perspecta, tribuenda est sideribus eadem divinitas. See p. 107, note †; and p. 109, note *.

† Stob. Ecl. Phys. c. 25. Plotin. Enn. iv. l. iii. c. 7. and Plutarch. adv. Colotem. p. 1123, A.

‡ Esse mundum deum, et deorum domum.

§ Deorum providentia.

esteemed

esteemed eternal, sovereign and supreme*. They are distinguished by the title of *natural gods*†.

2. The Heathens likewise believed that there were certain spirits who held *a middle rank*‡ betwen the gods

* Aristotle mentions it as a doctrine delivered down from their very earliest ancestors, and he himself applauds it as a divine saying, *that these first substances are gods*, Θεους ειναι τας πρωτας ουσιας. Metaphys. l. xiv. c. viii. in fin. Plato condemns the doctrine of Anaxagoras, because it was inconsistent with the divinity of the sun and moon, which have προσκυνησεις Ἑλλησιν τε και Βαρβαροις παντων, *the adorations of all the Greeks and Barbarians*. He makes Socrates disclaim this doctrine of Anaxagoras as absurd, and puts the following words into his mouth: *What! do not I believe as other men do, that the sun and moon are gods?* ουδε ἁλιον, ουδε σεληνην αρα νομιζω ειναι Θεους, ὡσπερ οι αλλοι ανθρωποι; Plat. Apol. Socrat. p. 362, F, G. ed. Ficini. And he directs a more excellent worship to be paid to the heaven than to the other gods, *because all men confessed it to be the cause of all good things*. Epin. p. 1006, A. Plutarch censures the Epicureans for asserting that the sun and moon are void of intelligence, whom all men worshipped. Adv. Colotem. p. 1123. Sanchoniathon (apud Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. i. c. 9.) represents the most antient nations, particularly the Phœnicians and Egyptians, as acknowledging only the natural gods, the sun, moon, planets and elements. And Plato declares it as his opinion, that the first Grecians likewise held these only to be gods, as many of the Barbarians in his time did. In Cratyl. p. 273, F. See also Herodot. l. i. c. 131, 138. l. iii. c. 16. Diodor. Sic. l. i. p. 10, 11. ed. Rhodomani. Strab. Geogr. l. xv. p. 732. Polyb. Hist. l. vii. p. 699, 700, ed. Gronov. Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. ii. c. ii. p. 59. Even Philo (lib. de. Somniis) and Origen (in his books περι αρχων) maintain that *the stars are so many souls incorruptible and immortal.*

† Φυσικοι Θεοι, Philo Byblius apud Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. i. c. ix. p. 33, ed. Paris.

‡ Παν το δαιμονιον μεταξυ εστι Θεου τε και Θνητου. Plato in Sympos. p. 202, tom. iii. ed. Serrani. Plutarch (de Defect. Orac.) says, *Those*

seem

gods and men on earth, and carried on all intercourse between them; conveying the addresses of men to the gods, and the divine benefits to men*. These spirits were called *dæmons*†, *distributors* or *dispensers* of good and evil to mankind. Their name is expressive of their office, and of that power and authority which they derived from the celestial gods‡. It was the opinion of many, that the celestial divinities did not themselves interpose in human affairs, but committed the entire administration of the government of this lower world to these subaltern deities§. Hence they

seem to me to have solved very many and great difficulties or doubts, who place the dæmons εν μεσῳ θεων και ανθρωπων.

* Plutarch. de Defect. Orac. p. 415, 416, 417, 421, E. Platon. Sympos. p. 202, 203, tom. iii. ed. Serrani. Apuleius de Deo Socrat. p. 674, 677, ed. Delph. Jamblichus de Myster. & August. de Civit. Dei, l. viii. c. 18. l. ix. c. 9, 21.

† They were called *dæmons*, παρα το δαηναι τα παντα, η μεριζειν τα αγαθα και κακα τοις ανθρωποις. Proclus in Hesiod. See also the scholiast on Homer, Il. i. ver. 222. Others derive δαιμων from δαημων, sciens. Plato's Cratylus, p. 397. and Lactantius, ii. 14. Dæmons were thought to be intrusted with the *inspection* and *government* of mankind.

‡ Plutarch (de Defect. Orac.) informs us, that each dæmon was called by the name of that celestial god παρ' ου διαπεμπεις και τιμης ειληχεν. Apuleius (De Deo Socratis, p. 675, ed. Delph.) says, Cuncta cælestium voluntate, numine, & authoritate, sed dæmonum obsequio, & opera, & ministerio fieri arbitrandum est. Apuleius here refines the vulgar system, when he represents dæmons merely as a ministerial order of beings.

§ Neque enim pro majestate deum cælestium fuerit, hæc curare. Apuleius de Deo Socratis, p. 677, ed. Delph. Plato (in Sympos. p. 202, tom. iii. ed. Ser.) speaks to the same effect: *No god has any immediate intercourse with man: all commerce between the gods and men is carried on by the mediation of dæmons.* Does not Plato's θεος ανθρωπω ου μιγνυται explain Dan. ii. 11?

became

became the grand objects of the religious hopes and fears of the Pagans, of immediate dependence and divine worship. *If idols are nothing*, says Celsus*, *what harm can there be to join in the public festivals? If they are dæmons, then it is certain that they are gods, in whom we are to confide, and to whom we should offer sacrifices and prayers to render them propitious.* In the most learned nations, they did not so properly *share* as *ingross* the public devotion. To these alone sacrifices were offered, while the celestial gods were worshipped only with a pure mind, or with hymns and praises†.

It has been often said that the dæmons of the Heathens were spirits of a higher origin than the human race. Those who hold this opinion lay the chief stress on the following arguments, the force of which we shall take the liberty to examine. 1*st*. "The supreme deity of the Pagans is called *the greatest dæmon*.' Supposing this to be the case, it is perhaps one proof, amongst many others, that their supreme deity sustained a human character, and had once been a mortal man. Notwithstanding the magnificent titles by which the Heathens describe their supreme deity, yet they do at the same time inform us that he had a father and a mother, a grandfather and a grandmother, and was of the same kindred with the other gods of whom he was chief. And though he was superior to any of them singly, he was no match for two or three of them in conjunction; as appears from the dread he was

* Apud Origen. contra Cels. l. viii. p. 393.

† Mede's Works, p 636.

in of being seized and bound by Neptune, Juno and Minerva; from whose violence he was not saved without the assistance of Briareus with his hundred arms. This is related by Homer* of that very Jupiter, whom he styles *the father and sovereign of gods and men, who thunders on high, and shakes all heaven with his nod.* Such likewise is the representation made of Jupiter by the other Heathen writers†: they ascribe to him the prerogatives, titles and epithets of their supreme natural divinity, and at the same time clothe him with the weaknesses, vices‡, and all the properties of a human being. It is plain therefore that he sustained two characters, that of a natural and that of a hero god. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the different representations made of him on any other supposition. It is allowed by all, that a mixture of physiology and herology runs through the Pagan system of divinity§. It is likewise evident, that as

* Il. i. ver. 398. See Lucian. Deor. Dialog. inter Oper. vol. i. p. 228, ed. Varior.

† Hesiod, in particular, speaks of Jupiter in the very highest terms, in his Theogony, ver. 47, 457, 481, 506, 548: and yet he tells us that he was the youngest son of Rhea and Saturn, and dethroned his father, ver. 453, 490.

‡ Chærea (in Terence, Eunuch. act. iii. sc. 5.) hardens himself into the commission of a rape, by the example of Jupiter, the god who shakes with his thunder the lofty battlements of heaven; qui templa cœli summa sonitu concutit.

§ That the first substances are gods, and that the deity contains universal nature, Aristotle tells us, was delivered *in the form of a fable*, εν μυθου σχηματι, Metaphys. l. xiv. c. 8, in fin. These fables were the means of corrupting their theology, and occasioned the Heathens

as amongst the natural so also amongst the hero gods there was a distinction of rank and dignity, and one was considered as prince of the rest. It farther appears, that deified human spirits were (according to the Pagan system of theology) associated with and represented the natural gods, and that both were called by the same names*. The sun, or æther, or air, or whatever other part of nature was esteemed the supreme deity of Pagans, was called in Egypt Osiris; in Chaldea and Phœnicia, Bel or Baal; and in many other countries, Jupiter. Now it is universally known that Jupiter, Bel and Osiris had once been mortal men, who were supposed to be advanced after death to a deified state. For the same reasons, therefore, for which the chief Heathen *numen* was called Osiris, or Bel, or Jupiter, he might be called a *dæmon;* supposing the word to denote a deified human spirit. It

thens to transfer their worship to new objects. Specimens of the manner in which they accommodated the fabulous traditions concerning their hero gods to the deified objects of nature, may be seen in Cicero de Nat. Deor. l. ii. c. 24, 25.

* Diodorus Siculus (l. i. p. 12, ed. Rhodomani) says that some of the earthly gods had the same names with the celestial, ὁμωνυμους ὑπαρχειν τοις ουρανιοις. See Plutarch cited above, note ‡, p. 110. From Philo Byblius (apud Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. i. c. ix. p. 33, ed. Paris.) we learn that the antient nations *gave the names of their kings to the elements of the world,* τοις κοσμικοις στοιχειοις, which were their natural deities, whom alone they acknowledged to be strictly and properly gods. Lord Herbert observes, (De Relig. Gentil. c. xi.) Initio heroas in astris plerumque, astra in heroibus colentes, adeo ut cognomines ita essent, neque satis judicari posset, num aniles de iis contextæ fabulæ ad astra mysticè, an ad homines mythicè pertinerent.

was under this last character that he was principally regarded by the common people. *2dly.* It is farther urged, "that dæmons are described as beings placed *between* the gods and men." This description respects not their *nature*, but their *office**, (which was that of *mediators* and agents between men on earth and the celestial gods;) and consequently agrees with such human spirits (and it is not to be denied that there were some such) as were thought to be advanced to the office of dæmons. It may be proper to take notice farther, that when Jamblichus †, the Pythagorean philosopher, makes it the reward of good men at death to be converted *into angels and angelical souls* ‡, he has the same meaning as if he had called them *dæmons*. The learned allow that Jamblichus, Hierocles, Simplicius and others, use the word *dæmons* and *angels* indiscriminately. Hierocles says expressly §, that the middle kind of beings were called indifferently *angels*, or *dæmons*, or *heroes*. Now it is universally admitted that the latter were human spirits: and consequently the former were so likewise. Philo says ||, *Souls, dæmons and angels are only different names, but imply one and the same substance.* And in another place ↓ he affirms *that Moses called those angels whom the other philosophers styled dæmons.* *3dly.* It is

* See above. p. 110.

† Apud Stob. Eclog. Physic. l. i. p. 144.

‡ Εις αγγελους δε και αγγελικας ψυχας.

§ In Car. Pythag.

|| De Gigantibus, p. 286.

↓ De Somn. p. 586. ους αλλοι φιλοσοφοι δαιμονας, αγγελους Μωσης εωθεν ονομαζειν.

pleaded

pleaded " that dæmons are expressly distinguished from *heroes*, who were the departed souls of men." Dæmons were advanced to a *rank* and *station** superior to that of heroes; and this difference occasioned the distinction. Plutarch † teaches, *that, according to a divine nature and justice, the souls of virtuous men are advanced to the rank of dæmons; and that from dæmons, if they are properly purified, they are exalted into gods, not by any political institution, but according to right reason.* The same author says ‡, *That Isis and Osiris were, for their virtue, changed from good dæmons into gods, as were Hercules and Bacchus afterwards, receiving the united honours of both gods and dæmons* §.

I do not affirm that the Heathens had no dæmons of a different kind from those which were of human extract ‖. The foregoing reflections were merely designed

* On this difference of rank and station, see Hierocles in secundum Aur. Carm. p. 41.

† Plutarch. Vit. Romul. p. 36, A. ed. Paris.; and in his book de Defect. Orac. he speaks of human souls as commencing first heroes, then dæmons, and afterward advanced to a more sublime degree.

‡ De Is. & Osir. p 361.

§ Και θεων και δαιμονων. These sentiments of Plutarch are confirmed by other writers. Diodorus Siculus (p. 3, ed. Rhodomani), after speaking of Hercules, adds, των δε αλλων αγαθων ανδρων οι μεν ηρωϊκων, οι δε ισοθεων τιμων ετυχον. It also appears from the case of the Greek Hercules, as related by Pausanias, (Corinthiac. l ii. c. x. p. 133, ed. Kuhnii,) that heroes rose by degrees to the rank of gods, and came to be worshipped as such. (For the worship paid to the gods was different from that paid to the heroes.)

‖ Some of the latest philosophers, in particular, (such as Apuleius de Deo Socrat. p. 690.) fancied that there was a higher kind of dæmons,

signed to shew, that the higher order of dæmons is not so frequently spoken of as is generally supposed; and that the common hypothesis is built upon weak grounds. I shall now assign those reasons which induce me to think, that by dæmons (such, I mean, as were *the more immediate objects of the established worship* amongst the antient nations, particularly the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans,) we are to understand beings of an earthly origin, or such departed human souls as were believed to become dæmons. Hesiod*, and many other poets†, who have recorded the antient history or traditions on which the public faith and worship were founded, assert that the men of the golden age, who were supposed to be very good, became dæmons after death, and dispensers of good things to mankind. This account of dæmons is fully confirmed by the other writings of the antient Heathens. Many passages have been produced from those writings by several learned moderns‡, in which dæmons must have the same meaning as in Hesiod. And there are many more which I do not remember to have met with in any former writers on this subject. Some of these passages have been already cited; and a much greater number we shall have occasion to cite in the sequel. I will here only take notice of two from Celsus, be-

dæmons, who had never inhabited human bodies. Ammonius in Plutarch entertained the same sentiment. De Defect. Orac. p. 431, tom. ii. ed. Paris. 1624.

* Hesiod. Oper. & Dier. l. i. 120.

† Plato's Cratylus, p. 398, tom. i. ed. Serrani.

‡ Mr. Jos. Mede and Dr. Sykes.

cause

they serve to shew how long the word preserved
ginal import, and was used to describe a deified
Thus Celsus* insults Christians under their
ings: *Your dæmon, or, as you say, the Son of*
gives you no help. In another place†, after
ing of the followers of Marcion, he adds, *Others*
to themselves another master and dæmon. Perhaps
uld be as useless as it would be endless to collect
e passages from the writings of the Heathens, in
h mention is made of dæmons in the sense here as-
l. For still some would allege that the word oc-
d frequently in a different meaning. Our main de-
(which is to explain and justify the Scripture re-
ntation of the Heathen deities) will be answered,
can be shewn that the more immediate objects of
e worship in the most polished Heathen nations
deified mortals. This, at the same time, may
to shew in what sense it is most natural to un-
and the word *dæmons* when it is used to describe
: gods.

iat the more immediate objects of popular adora-
amongst the Heathens were deified human beings,
fact attested by all antiquity, whether Pagan,
sh or Christian. Let the *Heathens* themselves
s, and let us credit the united testimony of their
rians, their poets, and their philosophers, to a
which they could not but admit, though it re-
ided so much to their dishonour. We shall begin
the doctrine of the *historians;* because it is clear

*pud Origen. c. Cels. l. viii. § 39, p. 803. † P. 272.

and explicit, and may serve to guide us through the labyrinths of the Pagan theology. Herodotus*, when speaking of the Persians, says, *They have neither statues, nor temples, nor altars.—What I take to be their reason, is, that they don't believe, like the Greeks, that the gods are of the race of men*†. Now, inasmuch as the Greeks derived their religion from the Phœnicians and Egyptians, and spread it amongst the Romans, there can be no doubt but that the gods of all these people were of human race. Philo Byblius‡, the translator of Sanchoniathon's History of the Gods, expressly assures us *that the Phœnicians and Egyptians, from whom other people derived this custom, reckoned those amongst the greatest gods who had been benefactors to the human race: and that to them they erected pillars and statues, and dedicated sacred festivals.* Diodorus Siculus§ treats largely concerning the Gentile theology; and he speaks of it as the opinion of antiquity, "that there were two classes of gods; the one eternal and immortal," (the natural gods spoken of above;) "the other such as were born upon the earth, and arrived at the titles and honours of divinity on account of the blessings they bestowed upon mankind‖." He considers Saturn, Jupiter, Apollo and the rest, as the primary gods of Paganism, and yet speaks of them as illustrious men.

* Lib. i c. 131.

† Ουκ ανθρωποφυεας νομισαν τους Θεους, καταπερ ὁι Ἑλληνες, ειναι.

‡ Apud Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. i. c. ix. p. 32.

§ Lib. i. & v.

‖ Lib. i. p. 12, ed. Rhodomani.

The

The *poets* deliver the same sentiments concerning the gods as the historians do. In their theogony*, or generation of the gods, (which was the same thing with their cosmogony, or generation of the world,) and in their fabulous theology, we have an account both of their natural and hero gods; though by mixing together their herology and physiology they have introduced much confusion into their system of divinity. With regard to the principal objects of popular worship, they have given us an account of their birth and parentage, of their marriage and offspring, and have entered into a detail of their actions†. Whatever sublime titles the poets bestow upon them, they hold them out to our view chiefly under a human character. Nor is there any just reason to affirm that the poets invented what they say concerning their gods. For their works are either faithful records of antient traditions, or accurate representations of life and manners. Epic and dramatic writings do not allow any deviation from truth and justness of character.

It is when reading the *philosophers* that it becomes us most to be upon our guard, if we would not be led into mistakes concerning the Pagan deities. When they began to reason upon the nature of the gods, innumerable objections arose in their minds against the vulgar system of theology; which some of them derided, and others endeavoured to refine and improve. Shocked at the absurdity of the worship paid

* See Hesiod's Theogony, and Homer's Il. xiv. ver. 201.

† See what was said above concerning Jupiter, p. 111, 112.

to

to dead persons, they might be willing to persuade themselves and others, that their dæmons were spiritual substances of a more noble origin than the human race. They undertook to determine, with what sort of beings all the different regions of the universe were peopled; and some of them filled the æther with such dæmons as had never been men. But we have no concern here with *the speculations* of the philosophers, who on this as on other points contradicted one another, and themselves likewise. It is sufficient to our present purpose to observe, that they were not able to deny that the public worship was directed to men who had been raised to the rank of gods and dæmons. Socrates *, indeed, judged it difficult to declare the origin of dæmons; which at first sight seems scarce consistent with a persuasion that they were of human extract. Nevertheless, he thought they were natives of this lower world, proceeding from the commerce of celestial with mortal beings. Perhaps this strange commerce was what created the difficulty in the breast of Socrates; for he rejected many of the common fables concerning the gods. Nor does it certainly appear, that even the celestial beings concerned in these amours were not originally mortals, though afterwards advanced to a deified state. Plato commends Hesiod and the other poets who affirmed that whenever any good man dies *he becomes a dæmon* †.

* Plato's Timæus, p. 481, ed. Basil.

† γινεται δαιμων. Plat. Cratyl. p. 398, tom. i. ed. Serrani. See also Maxim. Tyr. diss. xxvii. p. 283, ed. Davis.

He

e elsewhere speaks to the same purpose*. The tter Platonists, though they endeavoured to soften ıe absurdity of the established system of theology, ıuld not but admit a class of gods and dæmons ıat had been human souls. Varro, the most learned : all the Romans, asserted, as St. Augustin informs ı†, that one would be at a loss to find, in the writ-ıgs of the antients, gods who had not been men. icero‡ contends, "that the whole heaven was al-ıost entirely filled with the human race, that even ıe greater deities§ were originally natives of this ıwer world, that their sepulchres were shewn in reece, and the traditions concerning them preserved ı the mysteries." In like manner Pliny‖, La-

* *All those who die valiantly in war are of Hesiod's golden generation, and are demons; and we ought for ever to worship and adore their sepulchres, the sepulchres of demons.* He affirms the same concerning all who are judged excellently good in life, in whatever manner they die. Plato de Republ. l. v. p. 468, tom. ii. ed. Serrani.

† De Civit. Dei, l. viii.

‡ Quid? totum prope cælum, ne plures persequar, nonne humano genere completum est?—Ipsi illi, majorum gentium dii qui habentur, hinc a nobis profecti in cælum reperientur. Quære, quomodo demonstrantur sepulchra in Græcia: reminiscere, quoniam es initiatus, quæ traduntur mysteriis: tum denique, quàm hoc latè teat, intelliges. Tusc. Quæst. l. i. c. 12, 13. It is affirmed in Cicero's dialogue de Nat. Deor. l. i. that every age honoured the inventors of the use of food, ut deos omnium clarissimos. See also l. c. 42. l. iii. c. 15, 23. and compare Lactant. l. i c. xv. p. 85. l. ii. ii. p. 146. Euseb. Dem. Ev. l. viii. p. 364.

§ The greater deities were

Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars,
Mercurius, Jovis, Neptunus, Vulcanus, Apollo.

‖ Plin. Nat. Hist. l. ii. c. 7.

beo *; Servius † and others speak openly of the origin of the gods. And Plutarch himself vindicates the deification of human souls, by the principles of reason and philosophy ‡. Not only did Atheists and Epicureans assert that the Heathen gods had been men; this was a point allowed by the zealous supporters of the established religion, even in an age when the improvements in science exposed it to contempt.

These testimonies of the Heathens are fully confirmed by *facts* which cannot be disputed, particularly by the very nature of the worship paid to the Heathen deities. If no argument can be drawn from the sacrifices § which were offered them; yet their images, columns, shrines, reliques, altars (or grave-stones),

* Servius (upon the third Æneid) says, Labeo in libris qui appellantur, De diis quibus origo animalis est, ait esse quædam sacra, quibus animæ humanæ vertuntur in deos.

† Serv. ad Æn. viii. l. 319.

‡ See the passage from Plutarch cited above, p. 115.

§ Deified human ghosts might more naturally be supposed to be nourished by the fumes of incense and the steams of slaughtered beasts, ascending from their altars, than the sun, moon and stars. See Origen c. Cels. l. vii. c. 334, 335. Concerning the idea of sacrifices as the nourishment of the gods, consult Aristoph. Aves, ver. 183, 1515. Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. v. p. 181. Lucian. Prometh. tom. i. p. 183, ed. Græv. De Sacrificiis, ib. p. 366. Porphyr. de Abstin. l. ii. c xlii. p. 86, ed. Cantabr. We are told by Eusebius (Præp. Ev. l. ii. c. 9.) that in the earliest ages, when the stars only were adored, *they were not honoured by animal sacrifices*; which seem therefore to have been principally directed to the hero gods. See above. p. 111. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that such Pagans and Christians as believed the Heathen gods to be a different order of dæmons from human souls, represented those dæmons as nourished by libations and sacrifices.

and temples (which were their sepulchres), are sufficient proofs that the objects of public worship were such dead men and women as superstition deified *. Even *funeral rites* † were performed in their honour. Euhemerus therefore in his Sacred History, besides recording the pedigree and actions of the Heathen gods, pointed out the very places where they were buried. His history was translated into Latin by Ennius, and is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus without any marks of disapprobation. Those who censured ‡ were not able to confute the substance of his system.

* See Sir Is. Newton's Chronology, p. 159, 160. and especially Mr. Jos. Mede's Works, p. 632, 634. That the stately tombs of the Heathen gods became public temples, is also shewn by Eusebius, Præp. Ev. l. ii. c. 6.

† Mede's Works, p. 628, 630. Lowth on Is. viii. 19. Cicero de Nat. Deor. l. i c. 15. Lucan thus addresses Egypt:

— Tu plangens hominem testaris Osirin. L. viii. ver. 833.

‡ It has been said by learned men, upon the authority of a passage in Cicero, (de Nat. Deor. l. i. c. 42.) that the opinion of Euhemerus was generally regarded by the Heathens as atheism, or at least as great impiety. Were this true, the most that it would prove is, that the Heathen gods were not regarded as dead men by their worshippers, though they were really such. But what some represent as the general sentiment of the Heathens, is nothing more than the objection of Cotta, under the character of an *Academic*, which he could not sustain without proposing the difficulties and objections with which his subject was embarrassed. See Cicero de Nat. Deor. l. iii. c. 39. and l. i. c. 5. Cotta says, Ab Euhemero autem et mortes et sepulturæ demonstrantur deorum; and then asks the following question: Utrum igitur hic confirmasse videtur religionem, an penitus totam sustulisse? This objection is not designed to disprove the fact, that the Heathens worshipped dead persons; but to expose the absurdity of that worship. Cotta admitted the fact.

system. If the mere absurdity of an opinion would prove that it was never entertained, what a blank would this reasoning make in the history of religion amongst the Pagans!

We go on to examine the opinion of the *Jews* concerning the Heathen gods. With respect to the writers of the Old Testament; though they knew that the Pagans believed in sidereal and elementary deities,

fact, and knew that the worship itself pointed out the objects of it: Quo quid absurdius, quàm—homines jam morte deletos reponere in deos, quorum omnis cultus esset futurus in luctu? Cicero de Nat. Deor. l. i. c. 15. Plutarch also censures the doctrine of Euhemerus as productive of atheism, De Is. et Osir. p. 359, F. p. 360. Nevertheless, from this treatise it appears that the Egyptian priests acknowledged that Osiris and the other gods of Egypt had been men. Nay, Plutarch himself confesses (p. 359, E.) that those who hold this opinion, *εχουσιν απο των ιστορουμενων βεβαιωσιν, have the support of history;* to which he opposes speculation, p. 360. This confirms what was observed concerning the philosophers, p. 119. I admit, however, that the doctrine of Euhemerus might even in the opinion of the vulgar Heathens be very liable to the censure of impiety; and certainly was liable to this censure, if he maintained (as possibly he did, or might be thought to maintain,) that the Heathen gods were *mere* men, not advanced to a deified state; or that the Heathens had no other gods but these. In this view he might well pass for an atheist. The deification of men presupposed the existence of the natural gods, with whom they were associated, and from whom they derived their power and authority. And therefore, if he rejected the natural gods, he would be thought not to believe in any gods at all. With this he seems to be charged by Theophil. Antiochen. ad Autolyc. l. iii. p. 210, ed. Oxon. Concerning Euhemerus, see Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. ii. c. ii. p. 59, where there is an extract from the sixth book of Diodorus Siculus, now lost. See also Lactantius, Div. Instit. l. i. c. ii. p. 62. & de Irâ Dei, c. ii. p. 62, ed. Lugd. Bat. 1660.

yet

yet they very properly describe their gods as *dead** persons; because it was to such that the public worship was more immediately directed. Here it should be observed, that when they describe the Heathen gods as *dead* persons, they consider them as what they *really were*, not what they were *conceived to be* by their worshippers, as some have asserted: for their worshippers regarded them as men advanced to divine power and dominion. In contradistinction from these, the antient prophets called Jehovah the only *living* † God. Those Jews who translated the Old Testament into the Greek language (I mean the authors of that version which is called the Septuagint) style the Heathen gods *dæmons* ‡. And it has been generally supposed, that by dæmons they meant certain *created* spirits of a celestial origin, who, though fallen from God and virtue, possess a very extensive power over this lower world. This however is a point that ought

* This is implied in that declaration which Moses required each Israelite to make, at offering the first fruits of every year, Deut. xxvi. 14 *I have not given aught thereof for* (or *to*) *the dead*, to any Heathen deity; which supposes that each of those deities was nothing more than a dead person. Such was Isis, to whom Spencer and Le Clerc think there is here a peculiar reference. Those who partook of the sacrifices offered to the Pagan gods are said *to eat the sacrifices of the dead*, Ps. cvi. 28, compared with Numb. xxv. 1, 2, 3. It was because the Heathen deities were dead men, that Isaiah reproaches those who had recourse to their pretended oracles, as *seeking for the living to the dead*, Is. viii. 19.

† Deut. v. 26. Josh. iii. 10. 1 Sam. xvii. 26. 2 Kings xix. 4. Jerem. x. 10. Dan. vi. 26, and many other places.

‡ *They sacrificed unto dæmons*, δαιμονιοις, Deut. xxxii. 17. *All the gods of the Heathen are dæmons*, δαιμονια, Ps. xcv. 6. *They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto dæmons*, δαιμονιοις, Ps. cvi. 37.

DOC

not to be taken for granted. The authors of the Septuagint were not unacquainted with the Greek learning. They could not therefore be ignorant that the Heathens did not acknowledge any *created* spirits; or at least that, according to their established system of theology, the world and every thing in it was either eternal or begotten, not created. As little reason is there to suppose them ignorant in what sense the word *dæmons* was used by the Heathens, both in their writings and in their common discourse. No word in the Greek language could be more familiar to them, especially as applied to the objects of popular adoration, or such human spirits as were supposed to become dæmons, whether considered as good or evil. Now, why should it be presumed that these writers use this word in a sense different from all the Greeks, when speaking upon the same subject? Besides, did not the authors of the Septuagint version know (what all the world knew) that the Heathen gods had once been men? Could they be ignorant, that in the books which they translated, and which they acknowledged to be inspired, these gods were represented in this their true light? Or, shall it be taken for granted, that in open contradiction to the inspired writers, and in defiance of their own inward convictions, they were capable of affirming that *all* the Heathen gods were of a different origin from mankind? Such a degree of extravagance and wickedness as this implies ought not to be charged upon any writers without the strongest proofs. For these reasons, it appears *to me* most probable that they used the word to express

press such human spirits as became dæmons. And I am confirmed in this opinion by attending to the particular occasions on which they use it*. As to the other Jews who wrote in the Greek language, they were no strangers to this meaning of dæmons. We have already had occasion to explain the sentiments of Philo†. With respect to Josephus, he says expressly, *Dæmons are the spirits of wicked men* ‡. This shews, that in the writings of the Hellenistic Jews, particularly those who lived near the commencement of the Christian æra, the word is to be understood of such departed human spirits as became dæmons.

Is it not natural then to suppose that it bears the same meaning in *the New Testament?* There the Heathen deities are called dæmons: *Those things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils,* or *dæmons* §. St. Paul, whose language this is, was a

* It will be shewn below, that the passages in the Hebrew text which correspond to those cited above (note ‡, p. 125) from the Septuagint, manifestly refer to the hero gods of the Heathens. I add here that when the authors of this version say, Is. lxv. 11, that the Jews *prepared a table to a dæmon*, τω δαιμονιῳ, it seems to me more natural to understand them as reproaching the Jews with sacrificing to some Heathen dæmon, than to any fallen angel. See Lowth in loc. and compare Dr. Sykes's Further Enquiry, p. 35.

† See above, page 114.

‡ Τα γαρ καλουμενα δαιμονια, ταυτα δε πονηρων εστιν ανθρωπων πνευματα. De Bel. Jud. l. vii. c. vi. § 3.

§ Δαιμονιοις. The apostle adds, *I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils,* δαιμονιων, *dæmons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils,* δαιμονιων, *dæmons: ye cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils,* δαιμονιων, *dæmons.* 1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

person

person of extensive learning, and well acquainted with the theology of the Gentiles, which represented human spirits as becoming dæmons after death. He knew that these dæmons were the very persons to whom the Gentiles offered their sacrifices. At the same time he was conversant in those writings of the inspired prophets which taught that the Heathen-gods were men and women deceased. He himself (in imitation of those prophets) distinguishes Jehovah from them by the title of the *living* * God. Now, if he knew them to belong to the human species, would he deny that they had been men, and affirm that they were angels? To suppose that he would, is to charge him, not with error, but with wilful falsehood: a charge that cannot be supported but by putting a sense upon his language, which, to say the least, was not the most usual and common one. Besides, this apostle was not only himself well acquainted with the theology of the Gentiles, but was writing to Gentiles, who knew that according to their theology human spirits became dæmons after death; and who would naturally understand him as referring to Jupiter, Venus, and other men and women, whom they had once worshipped under this very character. Would not St. Paul then use the word *dæmon* in the same sense in which he knew it would be understood by those Gentiles to whom he was writing? If you say he borrowed it from the Jews who spoke the Greek language, particularly the authors of the Septuagint, you suggest a new proof of the point we would establish; for it

* Acts xiv. 15. 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 Thess i. 9.

must

must be admitted that he would employ it, as we have seen they did, to describe such human spirits as were called dæmons. There are passages in St. Paul's writings, and in other places of the New Testament, where it cannot bear a different meaning*.

In the late controversy upon this subject, both parties seem to have committed several great mistakes. I shall take notice of a very essential one relative to our present argument. On the one side it was asserted that *dæmon* never signifies an evil being till after the times of Christ; whereas the word is indifferent in itself, and is used in a bad as well as a good sense by very antient writers†. On the other side, it was affirmed

* When St. Paul preached to the Athenians Jesus Christ as risen from the dead, he seemed to some of his hearers *a setter forth of strange gods*, δαιμονιων, *dæmon*, (Acts xvii. 18, 22.) which, as our translators themselves were sensible, cannot signify *devils* (in the ordinary acceptation of that word), but must denote *deified men*; the Athenians imagining that St. Paul was recommending a new deity, who had once been a man. Nor can it be supposed that St. Paul himself, in his addressto the Athenians, would use the word in a sense different from what they did, when he calls them δεισιδαιμονεστερους, (ver. 22.) *persons much addicted to the worship of dæmons*, or gods of human original; for to such gods all the devotion of the Athenians and other Greeks was directed. The worship of canonized saints amongst the idolatrous Christians is called *the doctrine concerning dæmons*, 1 Tim. iv. 1. (explained above, ch. iii. sect. i. p. 105.) And the same corrupters of Christianity are reproached, for not repenting of the works of their hands, that *they should not worship dæmons*, (Rev ix. 20.) which must refer to *saint worship*, and *image worship*: for who can charge Christians with the worship of wicked spirits, as such?

† If the first dæmons were all good, as Dr. Sykes asserts, it is because the first men (whose souls they were), the men of the golden age, were all good. For we shall shew that the Heathens thought

firmed that dæmons in general, and the bad in particular, were spirits of a celestial origin, and that it was

that the departed spirits of good and bad men became respectively good and bad dæmons. There is therefore ground to presume, that as soon as mankind degenerated, their departed spirits would be represented as wicked and mischievous, that is, as bad dæmons. The common or constant use of *dæmon* in the earliest ages in a good sense, unless when κακος or some similar epithet is joined with it, is owing to its being applied at first to the deified souls of good men. Plutarch tells us, (in his Life of Dion, near the beginning, p. 958, ed. Paris. 1624.) *that it was the opinion of the antients, that evil and mischievous dæmons, out of envy and hatred to good men, oppose whatever they do.* In his treatise concerning Isis and Osiris, (p. 360.) he speaks of dæmons who had a mixture of virtue and vice in their character, and represents Xenocrates and Empedocles as believing there were such dæmons. From those writings of the antients which are come down to us, we accordingly find that they used the word *dæmon* in a bad sense, and applied it not only to the principle of evil, but to other malignant spirits. Pythagoras held dæmons who sent diseases to men and cattle; Diogen. Laërt. Vit. Pythag. p. 514, ed. Amst. And though some of the Heathens might regard evils as the inflictions of justice, and it is possible that κακος δαιμων may signify sometimes (and particularly in Homer, as Dr. Sykes contends) an *adverse* dæmon; nevertheless, the hurtful dæmons were generally considered as violent and cruel in their nature, and were accordingly to be appeased by cruel rites. Besides, they were thought to instigate men to wickedness. Zaleucus in his preface to his Laws (apud Stobæum, serm. 42.) supposes that an evil dæmon might be present with a man, τρεπων προς αδικιαν, *to influence him to injustice.* Empedocles (according to Plutarch. de Is. et Osir. p. 361, and in lib. περι του μη δανειζεσθαι) spoke of dæmons who were punished for their crimes. And Ocellus Lucanus, in a passage to be cited immediately, makes express mention of wicked dæmons. These instances are sufficient to shew in general, what alone they are here produced to shew, that the most antient writers believed in bad as well as good dæmons. Accordingly δαιμονιος frequently occurs in them, as a term of reproach as well as praise.

of

of the latter (or of apostate angels) that the word was to be understood, both in the Septuagint and in the passages of St. Paul cited above. We may allow (what however has not hitherto been established by clear and certain* evidence), that in the places under our present consideration the word is to be taken in a

*It seems to me difficult to determine with absolute certainty, whether *dæmon* is used in a good or in a bad sense in the LXX. It might, *possibly*, be chosen on account of its ambiguity: for the authors of that version were not disposed to give offence to the Pagans, amongst whom they lived; nor were they free themselves from every tincture of Paganism. Were we certain in what sense it was to be understood in the LXX, we should be equally certain of the meaning of it in the writings of St. Paul; inasmuch as this apostle (and indeed all the writers of the New Testament) adopted the style and diction of the LXX. That in both, *dæmon* is to be taken in a bad sense, seems to me somewhat *probable*, for the following reasons. Some of the Heathens themselves inferred from the actions ascribed to their gods, and the rites by which they were appeased, that they were not gods, but evil dæmons. See Plutarch. de Is et Osir. p. 361, B. p 362, E. et de Defect. Orac. p. 417, C. D. Compare Porphyr. de Abst. l ii sect. 36, 37 42. The Jews who wrote in the Greek language use *dæmon* in a bad sense, particularly Josephus (cited above) and the translator of Tobit, ch. iii. 8. ch. vi 17. Grotius thought "that the Hellenists used δαιμων in an ill sense, as the Hebrews did *Baal*; though both originally indifferent in their signification." Note on Matth. iv. 24. Lastly, the New Testament does certainly, on some occasions, by dæmons mean evil spirits, Matth. ix. 34. James ii. 19: and therefore the word may have the same meaning when it is applied to the Heathen gods. On the other hand, Philo tells us that the people spoke as commonly of good as of evil dæmons, ὡσπερ δε αγαθους δαιμονας και κακους λεγουσιν οἱ πολλοι. De Gigantibus, p. 286, ed. Paris. Philo however more frequently speaks the language and sentiments of the Platonic philosophers than of the Jews.

bad

bad sense, and is applied to wicked spirits. Nevertheless, it cannot be inferred from hence, that these wicked spirits were originally of a higher order than mankind. For, as the souls of many good men were thought to become good dæmons after death; so it was a prevailing opinion, that the departed souls of many bad men became bad dæmons. Thales, Pythagoras, Plato and the Stoics, as we learn from Plutarch *, represented *heroes as souls separated from their bodies, and as being good or bad according to their respective characters.* The Platonists commonly held the very same language with respect to *dæmons* †. From so early a writer as Ocellus Lucanus we learn, that *such as are begotten with injury and intemperance are wicked, and will be evil dæmons* ‡. And there is no notion which prevailed more generally over the Heathen world, from the earliest ages, than that concerning the power of ghosts to haunt and torment mankind, particularly the ghosts of those who died a violent

* De Placit. Phil. l. i c. 8.

† Plerique tamen ex Platonis magisterio, dæmones putant animas corporeo munere liberatas: laudabilium quoque virorum æthereos dæmones, improborum vero nocentes. Chalcid. in Platon. Tim. c. cxxxv. p. 330. Compare Origen contra Cels. l. vii. p. 334. Dr. Hammond on Matth. viii. 28. refers to Hieronymus Magius (Miscellan. l. iv. c. 12.) in proof of its having been the opinion of the antients, that human souls were turned into devils. But, as I have never seen the works of that author (which I am informed are in the Bodleian library at Oxford), I cannot tell what authorities he cites.

‡ Εἰ δὲ καὶ γεννήσουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι μετὰ ὕβρεως, καὶ ἀκρασίας, μοχθηροὶ οἱ γενόμενοι, καὶ κακοδαίμονες ἔσονται. Ocellus Lucan. p. 532, ed. Galei.

death:

death*: which may easily incline us to believe that the doctrine of the philosophers concerning evil men's becoming evil dæmons after death was the creed of the vulgar. From the Heathens the same or similar opinions passed to the Jews, whose doctors taught† "that the souls of the damned are for some time changed into devils, in order to be employed in tormenting mankind." Josephus (as we have already seen‡) affirms *that dæmons were the souls of wicked men*. Even Asmodeus (who is often described as the prince of evil spirits, and reckoned the very same as Sammael and Belzebub) is represented by the Jews as having for his mother Nahemah, the sister of Tubal-Cain§. Some of them taught that dæmons were the offspring of Sammael (the prince of dæmons) and Eve, before Adam knew her: others said Adam was their father, and Lilith their mother‖: and some

* In Horace's Epodes, (l. v. ep. v. ver. 91.) the boy whom the sorceress intended to murder thus menaces her:

Quin, ubi perire jussus exspiravero,
Nocturnus occurram furor;
Petamque vultus umbra curvis unguibus;
Quæ vis Deorum est Manium.

Compare Dido's threatening to Æneas, Virg. Æn. iv. 384; and what Tertullian says concerning the *aori* and the *biæothanati*, whom the magicians invoked. De Anima, c. lvii. p. 305.

† See Calmet's Dictionary, under the article *Demon*; and Theophylact as cited by Grotius on Matt. viii. 28.

‡ Page 127.

§ Elias Levita in Lexico suo.

‖ See Calmet's Dictionary, under the article *Demon*. Vandale de Origin. ac Progressu Idolat. p. 111, 112, 115, 116. Buxtorf's Lexic. Chald. Talmud. Basnage's History of the Jews, book iv. ch. xi.

might

might assign them a still different origin. It was a common opinion, that dæmons were the degenerate sons of God described by Moses*, and their issue by the daughters of men, the latter especially. To these they added the souls of other wicked men. These were the dæmons with which they were best acquainted; of whom therefore they most frequently speak. Had Dr. Sykes and his opponents attended to these sentiments of antiquity, the former would not have found his account in denying, nor the latter in asserting, that dæmons, in the passages in question, (from the Septuagint and the writings of St. Paul,) were wicked spirits: for, when the Jews used the word in a bad sense, they understood by it the spirits of such wicked men as were thought to be changed into dæmons. So that, whether the translators of the Old and the writers of the New Testament took the word in a good or a bad sense, the arguments urged above, to shew that human spirits were intended, hold good.

The *Christian Fathers*, instead of contradicting the sentiments here advanced (as is generally supposed), seem to me in some measure to confirm them. There is no one point that they more unanimously or strenuously maintain, than that all the Heathen deities had been men and women†.

Here

*Gen. vi. 2. Some of the Jews mistook these sons of God for angels; as was observed above, p. 42, note. Many thought that the angels were first corrupted by the love of women; as appears from the Apocryphal book of Enoch. See Calmet and Basnage.

† *Tertullian* (in his Apology, c. x, xi.) affirms that Saturn and Jupiter,

Here it will be objected, that the Fathers assert "that the Heathen gods were dæmons*; and that by dæmons they meant fallen angels." In order to our forming just conceptions of this subject, it will be necessary to attend to the proper point which the Fathers undertook to maintain against the Heathens; which was this, *that those beings whom the Heathens regarded as gods were dæmons*†. It was an article of the common creed amongst the Pagans, that the souls of deified men were taken up into heaven, advanced to a state of divine dominion there, and ranked with the

Jupiter, and the whole swarm of Heathen deities, were men, and that they were represented as such by the Pagans themselves, whose consciences would condemn them if they did not allow all those whom they worshipped as gods, once to have been men, omnes istos deos vestros homines fuisse. See also c. xxviii, xxix. According to Lactantius, (l. iii. c. xv.) their having no knowledge of any kings before Uranus and Saturn, is the reason why these were regarded as the most antient divinities. St. Austin (de Civit. Dei, l. vi.) says, Euhemerus, omnes tales deos, non fabulosâ garrulitate, sed historicâ diligentiâ, homines fuisse, mortalesque conscripsit. Vide Minuc. Fel. c. xxii. Lactant. l. i. c. xv. p. 85, 86. l. ii. c. ii. p. 146. Euseb. de Vit Constant. l. ii. c. xvi. l. iii. c. xxvi. Dem. Evang. l. viii. p. 364. Arnob. passim. According to Minucius Felix (p. 121, 122, ed. Davis.), Cyprian (de Idol. Vanit. p. 12.), and Austin (de Civit. Dei, l. viii. c. v. 57.), Leo, the Egyptian chief priest, discovered to Alexander the Great that most of the Heathen gods had been men.

* Δαιμονια εισι οι θεοι των εθνων. Just. Mart. c. Trypho. p. 310.

† Thus Tertullian addresses the Heathens, Ipsi putatis eos esse deos, quos nos dæmones scimus. Ad Scap. init. c. ii. Justin Martyr also, in his Apology, reproaches the Pagans with mistaking evil dæmons for gods. See Tertullian's Apol. c. xxii. and De Anima, c. lvii.

immortal

immortal gods*. Herein their deification did properly consist. These gods were commonly regarded as good† beings, whose merit‡ to mankind gave them a title to the honours of divinity. Now it is evident that the Heathens might assert, and Christians deny, their deification; and at the same time both of them allow that they had once been men. When Christians affirmed that the Heathen gods were dæmons, I acknowledge that they used the word in a bad sense§, as they generally do on other occa-

* Good dæmons inhabited the higher regions of the air. When they commenced gods, they were exalted to heaven. Diodorus Siculus (l. i. p. 12, ed. Rhodomani) ranks the gods taken from earth with those in heaven, αλλους εκ τουτων [των εν ουρανω θεων] γενεσθαι, κ. τ. λ. Arces attigit igneas, Horace, Carm. l. iii. od. iii. ver. 10. says of Hercules. The Egyptian priests (according to Plutarch. de Is. et Osir. p. 359.) taught, that the souls of their earthly gods εν ουρανω λαμπειν αστρα. They became immortal, according to the golden verses ascribed to Pythagoras,

Εσσεαι αθανατος θεος αμβροτος, ουκ ετι θνητος.

The change from a dæmon into a god is from *a mutable, passible, mortal* nature into a nature *immutable, impassible, and immortal.* Plutarch. de Defect. Orac. p. 416. See also the passage from Plutarch cited above, p. 115. and Cicer. de Nat. Deor. l. ii. c. xxiv.

† Menander says, *We must not think any dæmon to be evil, hurtful to a good life, but every god to be good.* And Euripides makes Iphigenia (in Taur. ver. 391.) say, Ουδενα γαρ οιμαι δαιμονων ειναι κακον. Vid. Herc. fur. 1341.

‡ Quos in cælum merita vocaverint, colunto; was part of the Roman law. And from Cicero de Nat. Deor. we learn, that the custom was, Ut beneficiis excellentes viros in cælum fama & voluntate tollerent.

§ Origen c. Cels. l. viii. p. 377. See also p. 234.

sions

sions, and thought the Scriptures did*. But it will not necessarily follow, from their using the word in a bad sense, that they applied it to fallen angels: for they might refer it to such human spirits as, in those ages, were thought to become evil and mischievous dæmons.

It must however be allowed that they did believe, as the Heathens also did, in dæmons of a celestial origin†, who had never been united to human bodies; and that several of them maintained that these dæmons were the gods of the Heathens. And inasmuch as the authority of these writers has been often opposed to (what we judge to be) the proper meaning of *dæmons* in the New Testament, it will be worth our while to inquire what regard is due to it in the case before us. The Heathens did not worship any such beings as we call fallen angels: it was false therefore to affirm that they did. The fathers themselves taught that the Heathen gods had all been men: they contradicted themselves, therefore, when they asserted that they were a different order of beings. Nor is this the only inconsistency with which they are chargeable in relation to the present subject. They very frequently boasted, that Christians could compel

* Id. l. v. p. 234. Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. iv. c. v. St. Aug. de Civ. Dei, l. ix. c. xix.

† Lactantius, ii. 15, says, *Trismegistus calls dæmons evil angels; so well was he acquainted with this, that they had been celestial beings, but were depraved, and so were become terrestrial.* And in ch. 14. he affirms *that there are two sorts of dæmons, the one celestial, the other terrestrial; that the latter are the authors of the ill things that are done, whose prince is the devil, whom Trismegistus calls the dæmonarch* (prince of dæmons).

the

the Heathen gods to confess themselves to be dæmons, and that none of them dared to lie to a Christian *. Nevertheless these gods, inasmuch as they were human spirits, did lie to Christians when they declared that they were celestial dæmons. The Fathers themselves constantly maintain † that Saturn, Jupiter, Serapis, Æsculapius, and all the Heathen gods, had been mortal men. Now if the Heathen gods had all been men, with what truth could they deny this, and call themselves fallen angels? Tertullian tells us that the Heathen gods and dæmons were only different names of the same beings ‡; and yet on other occasions he represents the dæmons as *personating* § the Heathen gods: which manifestly supposes that they were different beings. Lactantius affirms

* Edatur hic aliquis sub tribunalibus vestris, quem dæmone agi constet. Jussus a quolibet Christiano loqui spiritus ille, tam se dæmonem confitebitur de vero, quàm alibi deum de falso. Dæmones - - - Christiano mentiri non audentes. Tertullian. Apol. c. xxii p. 22. Vide etiam Minuc. Fel. c. xxvii. Cyprian. ad Donat. p. 3. De Idol. Vanit. p. 10. Ad Demetrian. p. 133. Lactant. ii. 15.

† Tertullian. Apol. c. xxiii. Minucius Felix, c. xxvii. compared with the passages cited above, p. 134, note †.

‡ Sed hactenus verba, jam hinc demonstratio rei ipsius, qu ostendemus unam esse utriusque nominis qualitatem. Apol. c. xxii

§ He speaks of a dæmon, sub personis defunctorum delitescenti De Anima, c. lvii.

‖ *They not only confess themselves to be dæmons, but also declare their ow names by which they are worshipped in the temples.* Lactant. ii. 15. Just Martyr says that *impure spirits under various appearitions went in unto t daughters of men, and defiled boys; and that each of them was invoked such a name as he had given to himself.* Apol. i. p. 10 ed. Thirlb. I *imagined* Jupiter, Apollo, &c. were the proper names of the da

mons

affirms that the very names by which the Heathen gods were worshipped were the names of dæmons; though the whole world knows that they were the real names of men and women. Lastly, such of the primitive Christians as assert that the gods of the Heathens were fallen angels, not only contradict certain and evident matter of fact, and their own avowed opinion of the Heathen gods, but they also contradict those sacred writings which represent them as nothing more than mortal men.

From the Scriptures, it is plain, the Fathers did not borrow their sentiments concerning the Heathen gods. The sacred writers do, perhaps, brand as evil dæmons those whom the Heathens regarded as *worthies*, and worshipped as gods: but they never represent fallen angels as the gods of Paganism, nor as personating those gods, nor as passing under the same names. Why then has the language of the Fathers on this subject been adopted by all succeeding ages, with the reverence due only to that of immediate inspiration? Though I do not remember to have seen it taken notice of by others, yet it seems highly probable that this language was borrowed from the Pagan philosophers. Several of the latter asserted, as the former did, that those beings whom the Heathen world worshipped as gods were evil dæmons. Both of them, in support of this assertion, urged the same arguments; such as the actions ascribed to

mons: but Tertullian seems to have thought the dæmons only procured themselves to be worshipped under those names, which belonged to deceased men and women.

the

the Heathen gods, the rites appointed to placate them, and their opposition to the cause of true piety. Both taught that evil dæmons were spirits of a celestial origin, and that they were inspirers and authors of prophecies and miracles *. Nor can we wonder that the

* Plutarch (in his treatise de Is et Osir. p 360, ed Paris. 1624.) mentions it as the opinion of the most antient theologists, and declares his own approbation of it, that what is related of Osiris and Isis and other hero deities, is not to be considered as an account either of gods or of men; but of certain *great dæmons*, who transcend mankind in power, but, like them, have a mixture of vice in their character. And in his book de Oraculorum Defectu p. 417, he argues from the obscenity, cruelty and folly of the worship paid to the gods, that it was instituted to avert the wrath of *wicked dæmons*. Compare Plutarch. de Is. et Osir. p. 361. Porphyry (de Abstin. sect xxxvi, xxxvii. p. 80, 81.) says, that the man who is studious of piety does not offer animal sacrifices to the gods, δαιμοσι δε, *but to dæmons*. He describes wicked dæmons, very much in the manner the Fathers do, as endeavouring to draw the regards of mankind to themselves, as being ambitious of passing for gods, and as calumniating *the best deity*, τον αριστον θεον, sect. xxxix, xl, xlii. p 83, 84, 85, 86. He affirms, as the Fathers do, that evil dæmons are nourished by libations and the steams of the sacrifices, sect. xlii. p. 86; and that they personate the gods, sect. xl. p. 84. Philo, who was more properly a Platonist than a Jew, had said long before, that *evil spirits usurp the names of angels*, De Gigantibus, p. 286, C. ed. Paris. Porphyry (sect. xli. p. 85) ascribes the whole efficacy of magic to the power of evil dæmons; as the Fathers likewise did. There is no ground to assert that Porphyry borrowed his notions from the Christians, to whom he bore an implacable hatred. He speaks agreeably to the principles of the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy; nor does he advance any new doctrine. Jamblichus delivers the like sentiments concerning evil dæmons (de Mysteriis, segm. iii. c. 31, & passim.) with Porphyry; professing at the same time to have borrowed them from the Chaldeans; to whom (I apprehend)

the Fathers should be too ready to adopt the sentiments and language of the philosophers. They had been educated in the schools of Pagan philosophy: and who can make sufficient allowance for the prejudices of education? Certain it is, in fact, that upon their embracing Christianity, though they adopted some new opinions, they dropped very few of their old ones; and in too many instances, instead of rectifying their preconceived opinions by the Scriptures, tortured the Scriptures (as all men are apt to do) to support their preconceived opinions. In the case under our present consideration, they were not perhaps governed entirely by prejudices of their own; they are suspected at least of acting in some measure from a principle of conformity to the prejudices of others (as will be shewn in the sequel). However this may be, they ought not to have countenanced an opinion that was repugnant to revelation as well as to the common sense of mankind, and supported merely by the authority of the most superstitious of all the Pagan philosophers.

Notwithstanding the attachment of the Fathers to the Pagan system of dæmonology, some of them maintain, and Justin Martyr in particular, that dæmons were *the souls of dead men**. When this learned writer is proving that the soul does not die

prehend) they of right belong. J. Ger. Vossius, in his book de Sectis Philosophorum, says, Mea autem hæc sententia; non posse aliunde melius, quam ex hoc opere, quid & Platonici de divinis rebus senserint, cognosci. Ægyptiorum & Chaldæorum opinionem exprimit. Vossius is here speaking of Jamblichus de Mysteriis.

* Ψυχας αποθεωτας.

with

with the body, he argues from the case of *those who are seized and tormented by the souls of the deceased, whom all call dæmoniacs and madmen* *. Athenagoras, who flourished in the second century, as Justin also did, reckons *the souls of the giants amongst the dæmons* †. Tatian, indeed, who believed that the human soul dies, could not allow that any human souls became dæmons ‡: but his reasoning against this notion is a proof that it was entertained by others. Tertullian likewise conceived the state of the soul after the death of the body, to be such as ill consisted with the idea of dæmons, who wandered about in the region of the air near the earth. Accordingly we find that he speaks principally of such dæmons as were never united to human bodies. Nevertheless, even from Tertullian, it appears that there was a current belief in his time of dæmons that had once been men; and that he himself did not wholly reject them. He tells us in his Apology, that *from a corrupted stock of angels there sprung a still more degenerate race of dæmons* §. It is universally allowed that Tertullian here refers to *the sons of God* in the His-

* Οι ψυχαις αποθανοντων λαμβανομενοι και ριπτουμενοι ανθρωποι, ους δαιμονολήπτους και μαινομενους καλουσι παντες. Apol. i. al. ii. p. 65. Paris. 1620, p. 54, ed. Bened. p. 27, ed. Thirlb.

† —— και ά. των γιγαντων ψυχαι, οι περι τον κοσμον εισι πλανωμενοι δαιμονες. Athenag Apol. p. 28, B.

‡ Tatian (Orat. contra Græcos, p. 154.) says, *Dæmons are not the souls of men;* and (p. 148.) he affirms *that they were ejected from the heavenly conversation.*

§ Sed quomodo de angelis quibusdam, suâ sponte corruptis, corruptior gens dæmonum evaserit, &c, Tertullian. Apol. c. xxii. p. 21.

tory

tory of Moses *, who mixed with the daughters of men, and who were believed to be angels by Tertullian, and by almost all the Fathers of the four first centuries †, upon the authority of Philo, Josephus, and the antient editions of the Septuagint, which had substituted *the angels of God* instead of *the sons of God.* So that according to Tertullian, and I believe I may say according to the general sense of those ages, the worst kind of dæmons are, in part at least, of human original. In another place, however, Tertullian expresses himself in the following manner ‡: *We discover (if I be not mistaken) the fallacy of an evil spirit lurking under the masks of dead men, by facts; when, during his being exorcised, he sometimes affirms himself to have been a man, one of our progenitors, sometimes a gladiator, or one who fought with wild beasts* §, *as elsewhere he would say he was a*

* Gen. vi. 2.

† See Whitby's Strictur. Patrum, in Gen. c. vi. 4. p. 5. Some think the Fathers were drawn into this error by the authority of the Apocryphal book of Enoch.

‡ Hanc quoque fallaciam spiritus nequam sub personis defunctorum delitescentis, nisi fallor, etiam rebus probamus quum in exorcismis interdum aliquem se ex parentibus hominem suis affirmat, interdum gladiatorem, vel bestiarium, sicut et alibi deum; nihil magis curans, quàm hoc ipsum excludere quod prædicamus, ne facile credamus animas universas ad inferos redigi, ut et judicii et resurrectionis fidem turbet. Et tamen ille dæmon postquam circumstantes circumvenire tentavit, instantia divinæ gratiæ victus, id quod in vero est, invitus confitebitur. Tertullian. de Anima, c. lvii. p. 305, 306. ed. Paris.

§ This confirms what is observed above, p. 133, and below, p. 146, concerning such as suffered a violent death.

god;

god; being concerned for nothing more than this, that he may contradict what we preach, and prevent us from believing that all souls go to the shades below; and this in order to disturb our faith of a judgment and a resurrection. Yet will this dæmon, after he has tried to delude the company, be so far over-ruled by the presence of divine grace, as unwillingly to confess himself to be what he really is.* Tertullian here contradicts what he himself elsewhere advances concerning those dæmons who were the issue of the daughters of men; as well as what he asserts with respect to the power of Christians, to compel dæmons to declare what they truly were, and to prevent them from telling lies in their presence. For here a dæmon, though in the end he owns his real character, is guilty of lying, even under the exorcism of Christians, by asserting he had been a man. It is more material to observe farther, 1st, That it must have been at that time a very common opinion, that dæmons were the souls of dead men; for otherwise this evil spirit would not have been represented as affirming that he had been *a man*. 2dly, The reason assigned by Tertullian for rejecting this opinion, was his believing that all souls remained in the shades below till the day of judgment: which is mentioned amongst the errors and paradoxes† of this learned writer; and therefore could have no weight with

* Or, *to hades*, the region underneath the earth; which according to many of the Heathens, as well as Tertullian, was the region of the dead.

† See Tertullian, p. 306, note b, ed. Paris.

those

those Christians, who taught that human souls either ascended the ethereal regions, or wandered about the earth, according to their respective characters.

The sentiments concerning the state of separate souls, which were entertained by Christians in general, and by Origen in particular, the most learned of all the Fathers, were very different from those of Tertullian. Near the beginning of his seventh book against Celsus, Origen undertakes to shew that the antient oracles were not inspired *by any Gods*, as the Heathens commonly thought, but on the contrary by *evil dæmons* *. In proof of this point, he observes †, (amongst other things) "that all men, whether Jews or Christians, Greeks or Barbarians, believe that the *human* soul survives the dissolution of the body: that it is agreeable to reason to think that the *pure* soul ascends the pure regions of ether, leaving the gross body and its pollutions behind; but that the *wicked* soul is borne downwards by its sins, flying about the earth, or living near sepulchres." He then asks the following question ‡: *What sort of spirits should we judge those to be, which are tied down whole ages, as one may say, to particular buildings or places, either by certain charms, or by their own wickedness?* that is, Are they such purified human spirits as reason tells us ascend the sublimer regions, and the Heathens esteem as gods; or are they those polluted human spirits who are detained near this lower earth, and are evil dæmons? This question

* Page 333. † Page 334.

‡ Ποδαπα χρη νομιζειν ειναι πνευματα, κ. τ. λ. Ib.

does not appear to concern any but human spirits; no mention having been made of any other. Origen resolves this question in the following manner: *Reason tells us that they ought to be regarded as wicked spirits, who use prophecy (a thing of an indifferent nature in itself) to deceive mankind, and to draw them from the pure worship of God**. There has been occasion to observe, that the antients were of opinion, not only that *wicked* human spirits became dæmons, but also that *those who suffered a violent death became such.* Now from St. Chrysostom we learn, that even this was the belief of the meaner people in his time†. And had it not, at that time, been generally thought that dæmons were the souls of the deceased; would dæmoniacs have said, as from the same author we learn they did, that *they were possessed by the soul of such or such a monk* ‡?

The forecited passages from the Fathers appear to me to contain a sufficient proof, that whatever they teach concerning the miraculous powers and operations of celestial dæmons was borrowed from the Pagans: that many of them did assert, that some human souls after the dissolution of their bodies became dæmons, and that for several ages after the coming of Christ dæmons did very commonly denote

* Ibid. † Πολλοι των αφελεστερων νομιζουσι τας ψυχας των βιαιως θανατω τελευτησαντων δαιμονας γινεσθαι. De Laz. Serm. 2. tom. i. p. 727. E.

‡ Τι ουν, ὁτι οἱ δαιμονες λεγουσι, του μοναχου του δεινος ἡ ψυχη ειμι, φησι. Chrysost. de Lazaro, tom. i. p. 728. Αυτοι, φησιν, οἱ δαιμονωντες βοωσιν, ὁτι ψυχη του δεινος εγω. In Matt. hom. xxviii. al. xxix. tom. vii. p. 336, C.

such

such human souls; agreeably to the meaning affixed to them by the antient Heathens and Jews, and by the apostles of Christ. The writings of the Fathers, therefore, instead of destroying, do in some measure confirm the explication we have given of the dæmons mentioned in Scripture, as the objects of Pagan devotion. At the same time they bear express testimony to this great truth, (the establishment of which has been our main view, in what has been hitherto advanced in this section,) that all the Heathen gods, except the deified parts and powers of nature, belonged to the human race. The forming a true idea of the Heathen gods being a matter of no small importance to a just defence of the Scripture, we hope to be excused for having taken up so much time in discussing it.

If the foregoing account of the Pagan gods be just, there will be no difficulty in vindicating the censures passed upon them in the sacred writings. With regard to the parts and powers of nature which the Heathen world deified, they are represented in Scripture as the creatures of God's power, and the passive instruments of his decrees *. Even *the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and all the host of heaven*, however revered by the Pagans as the chief deities, *the Israelites are forbidden to worship and serve; because Jehovah, their God, placed them in the firmament of heaven*; not for the use of any one particular nation, but *for the common benefit of the whole human race* †.

* See above, p. 93—4.

† Deut. iv. 19, compared with Gen. i. 17.

It is extraordinary that Moses, at a time when the world was universally regarded as animated and divine, and the elements and the heavenly bodies were thought to possess an internal power to exert themselves in all their admirable effects; it is very extraordinary that Moses, at this time, should discover, publish, and (by suitable miracles) confirm the opposite doctrine. His doctrine is perfectly agreeable to the modern philosophy, which represents the whole natural world as a merely material, inert, inactive thing, without any wisdom or power of its own, and resisting any change of state, whether of rest or motion; and which must therefore be continually upheld and directed by the wisdom and power of God, to whom the whole train of natural causes and effects is to be ascribed. The doctrine alone of Moses, so remote from the sentiments and philosophy of his age, and so agreeable to truth, creates a strong presumption of his having received it by immediate revelation.

As to the other gods of Paganism, whether they were such human souls as became dæmons, or (as some apprehend) created spirits of a superior order; we have already * seen, that the Scripture gives us such a view of them as is inconsistent either with their inspiring prophecies or working miracles. And it will be shewn in the sequel, that all supernatural effects are referred to God alone by the sacred writers. Is it possible for them to contradict themselves, as they must do, if they ascribe such effects to the Hea-

* Ch. iii. sect. i.

then

then gods? But so far are they from doing this, that they constantly represent those gods as utterly impotent and insignificant; either as having no real existence, or no more power than if they did not exist. They call them *vanities* *, things of no kind of value or efficacy. Nor is this censure confined to a part only of the Heathen gods; it is extended to all, without a single exception. *They are* ALL *vanity* †. ALL *the gods of the nations are idols* or *no-things* ‡; not powerful evil spirits, but mere nullities. In this manner the antient prophets of God spoke of the Pagan deities; and the apostles of Christ used the same language: *We know that an idol is nothing in the world* §. This is not to be understood of the mere images of the gods: for the Heathens did not regard those images, in themselves considered, as real gods. They believed them to be the representatives and the receptacles ‖ of their gods, and in this view they spoke of them as gods, and the objects of divine worship; and it is in reference to the divine powers supposed to reside in them that the Scriptures

* Deut. xxxii. 21. 1 Kings xvi. 13, 26. Jerem. viii. 19. ch. xiv. 22. ch. xviii. 15. In 1 Sam. xii. 21, they are called *vain things which cannot profit*. They are called *lying vanities*, Ps. xxxi. 6.

† Isaiah xli. 29. Jerem. x. 8.

‡ אלילים elilim, *nothings*, or things of no value, Ps. xcvi. 5. (compare Job xiii. 4.) See also Levit. xix. 4. 1 Chron. xvi. 26. Ezek. xxx. 13. and compare 1 Kings xviii. 27. Is. xlv. 5.

§ 1 Cor. viii. 4. ch. x. 19.

‖ Various ceremonies were used to induce the gods to take up their residence in the temples and statues erected to receive them. See Arnob. l. vii. p. 203, 207. Sozom. H. E. l. vii p. 724. Origen c. Cels. l. vii. p. 378.

affirm

affirm that they are nothing. On all occasions the sacred writers deride these pretended residences of the Heathen deities, as mere earthly materials polished by the hand of the artificer, and the deities themselves as equally void of understanding, or rather as being nothing distinct from those senseless materials, and existing only in the imagination of their deluded worshippers. *The stock is a doctrine of vanities**. *Their idols are silver and gold, or wood and stone, the work of men's hands, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell*†. Agreeably hereto the Scripture represents the votaries of these divinities as persons utterly lost to reason, and without a shadow of excuse. *They are altogether brutish and foolish*, and discover no more understanding than the idols they make‡.

Oracles, prophecies, prodigies were ascribed by the Heathens to their dæmons: and on their favour the good or evil state of men's lives was thought to depend. This persuasion was the ground of their worship. And the proper point in dispute between idolaters and the prophets of the true God was, whether that persuasion was supported by *facts*. We find the messengers of God challenging idolaters to justify their worship of idols; and the idol gods themselves, to give proof of their divinity, by a display of knowledge, or by some exertion of power, such as was

* Jerem. x. 8.

† Deut. iv. 28. Ps. xcvii. 7. Ps. cxv. 4. Ps. cxxxv. 15. Is. xl. 18. ch. xlii. 17. ch. xliv. 9. Jerem. ii. 27. ch. x. 3. Dan. v. 4, 23. Habak. ii. 18. Acts, xvii. 29. 1 Cor. viii. 4. ch. x. 19. ch. xii. 2. 1 Thess. i. 9.

‡ *Jerem. x. 8.* Ps. cxv. 8. Ps. cxxxv. 18. Habak. ii. 18, 19.

either

either hurtful or beneficial to mankind; and even admitting that, by such a display of their power or knowledge, the Heathen deities would have established their claim to divinity, and their title to the homage of mankind. *Produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons,——Let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them:* produce your antient oracles, that we may judge whether they were fulfilled by correspondent events; *or*, now *declare to us things for to come. Shew us things for to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed,* that it may appear ye have, what your votaries assert, a title to the reverence and worship of mankind. *Behold, ye are nothing, and your work of nought**; and therefore there can be no shadow of reason for paying you homage. How very different is this language of the antient prophets from that of our learned moderns, who tell us that idolatry cannot possibly be justified by any miracles, however numerous or splendid; and that whatever power over mankind the Heathen gods might possess, they could have no right to worship! The prophets would have allowed their title to worship, had they admitted their power†. Their utter impotence is the only reason of the Scripture's remonstrating against paying them homage. I add, that these remonstrances of Scripture,

* Isaiah xli. 21. 24.

† The reasoning urged above, p. 74—6, may serve to justify the decision of this case by the prophets.

which

which are frequently repeated*, are confirmed by facts, by many striking testimonies of the utter inability of the Heathen deities to interpose either for the conviction of gainsayers, or for the benefit of their worshippers, or in vindication of their own honour. They could not interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream †, nor the hand-writing upon the wall of Belshazzar's palace ‡; nor were they able to answer by fire, in the public trial between their own prophets and the prophet of Jehovah §; though on these several occasions, but especially the last, all their credit was at stake. Nor did they oppose (how much soever it might be their interest to do it) any miracles of their own to those either of Moses or the Messiah; as we hope to shew in the sequel.

In opposition to all this evidence, it has been asserted that the system of Pagan idolatry was sup-

* Jerem. x. 3, 5, 15. Is. xliii. 8. ch. xliv. 7. ch. xlv. 16, 20. ch. xlvi. 5. ch. xlviii. 3. 1 Cor. viii. 4. ch. x. 19. ch. xii. 2. 1 Thess. i. 9.

† Dan. iv. 7. ‡ Dan. v. 7.

§ 1 Kings xviii. If spirits (as learned men have affirmed) can do *invisibly* all that men can do *visibly*; why, in the contest related in this chapter, did not evil spirits bring fire in a secret manner from some neighbouring place to the altar, to consume what was laid upon it? There seems to be no *peculiar* difficulty in such a miracle.

Should any object to what is here urged concerning the impotence of the Heathen gods, that in 2 Chron. xxviii. 23, the sacred historian is represented as saying that *the gods of Damascus smote Ahaz*; I answer in the words of Mr. Hallett, (vol. ii. p. 79.) "All this difficulty is avoided, if we follow the old Hebrew copies from which the Greek translation was made, which reads thus, *And king Ahaz said, I will seek to the gods of Damascus who smote me.*"

ported

ported by prophecies and miracles delivered and performed not by the fictitious deities of the Heathens, but by *devils*, or wicked dæmons of a higher order than mankind, who personated the gods, lurked within their consecrated images and statues, inspired the vates, animated the fibres of the entrails of victims, governed the flight of birds, guided the lots, framed the oracles, and exerted themselves to the utmost in promoting idolatry, in order to involve men in the guilt of it, to draw all adoration to themselves, to secure proper food and nourishment from the rich steams and blood of the victims which were offered to them, and hereby to strengthen themselves for the enjoyment of their lustful pleasures with boys and women. It has been farther asserted, that these wicked spirits were, properly speaking, the gods of the Heathens; rather than those imaginary beings whom they seemed to themselves to worship. In support of these assertions, appeal is made to the writings of the Fathers, and the authority of Scripture.

For the honour of human nature, who would not wish that such extravagant opinions as these had never been broached by any writers? Nevertheless, it must be owned, they are clearly contained in the writings of the Fathers *. These opinions, however, are

* Justin Mart. Apol. p. 113, ed. Thirlb. Tertullian. de Anima, c. lvii. Minucius Felix, c. xxvii. Cyprian de Idolor. Van. p. 206. Arnob. c. Gent. l. i. 26. Lactant. de Orig. Error. l. ii. c. 16 De verâ Sapient. l. viii. c. 16. ed. Spark, p. 399. Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. v. c. 4. St. August. de Civ. Dei, l. viii. c. 16. See also Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 66, 70, 77. and Mede's Works, p. 680, 68..

there only asserted, not proved; and perhaps were never really believed by the very persons who maintained them, and upon whose authority alone they have been received in succeeding ages. For the Fathers, though they sometimes taught, or allowed, that Pagan idolatry was supported by oracles and miracles, do nevertheless on other occasions confess, or clearly intimate, that Paganism had no other support than human craft and imposture *. They pretended, indeed, that any Christian was able to compel the Heathen gods to confess themselves to be devils, as well as to eject † them from the bodies of men; but every one now knows that there was no miracle ‡ in the case. To me it seems to be a matter of no great importance, what sentiments the Fathers entertained on the subject under our consideration; and therefore we will proceed to examine those of the sacred writers. Several general reasons have been already § suggested, to shew how unlikely it is that the Scriptures should assert or allow that idolatry was sup-

* Origen c. Cels. p. 333. Euseb. Præp. l. iv. c. 1, 2, 3. Clemens Alexandrinus, Strom. l. iii. See Fontenelle's Hist. of Oracles, ch. ix. p. 76. and Clerici Hist. Eccles. prolegom. p. 54. With regard to the residence of invisible beings in the consecrated images of the Heathens, it is frequently treated by the antient apologists with the scorn it so well deserved. See Arnob. l. vi. p. 200. Lactant. l. ii. p. 147. Perhaps one reason why on some occasions the Fathers allow that Paganism was supported by miracles was their finding the Pagans more disposed to refer them to evil agents than to disbelieve their reality.

† See Dr. Whitby's General Preface to the Epistles, p. xxvi.

‡ See Dr. Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 80, &c.

§ *See above*, p. 148.

ported

ported by the miraculous interposition of any wicked spirits; whether they did or did not counterfeit the souls of men deceased. To what has been already offered, I would add the few following observations on the case before us.

1st. The Scripture has never given the least intimation that the gods of the Heathens were of two different kinds; the one such as they *seemed to themselves* to worship, the other the *real* objects of their devotion. Much less has the Scripture asserted or intimated, that, though the former were utterly impotent, the latter were powerful wicked spirits, who were always promoting idolatry by prophecies, prodigies, and miracles. Now, is it credible that the prophets of God, who were in the highest degree anxious for the welfare of the Israelites, should never give them any notice of their hourly danger from such powerful dæmons? and that they should tell the people, they had nothing to fear or hope from the gods they were so prone to worship; without dropping a single hint, that those gods had a thousand abettors, who were allowed to work miracles, in order to involve them in the guilt of idolatry? This will appear still more incredible, if we consider, 2dly, That had the claims of the Heathen deities been supported by other invisible agents, assuming their names, and acting their parts; this would have been the very same thing, *to the apprehensions of mankind*, as if those deities had themselves interposed in support of their own divinity. For, had miracles been performed in the name of the Heathen gods, the

spectators

spectators must have referred them to those gods, rather than to any other beings of whom they were entirely ignorant. And if to the spectators the Heathen gods *necessarily appeared* to possess a miraculous power, would not this have produced, and very justly too, the same effect as if they had *really* possessed it? If the exercise therefore of this power, for the benefit or to the prejudice of mankind, by the idol gods, would have justified the worship of them (as the prophets of God allow it would), the exercise of the same power by others, under the circumstances here supposed, would have done so too. 3dly. The prophets of God could not with truth or sincerity affirm that apostate angels were, properly speaking, the gods of the Heathens; because they represent their gods as *dead men*. Nor do they speak of them in this manner, in order to accommodate themselves to the common opinion of the Heathens concerning them, as some have imagined*; for the Heathens regarded them as *deified souls of their worthies*. They call them dead men, because they were really and truly such, and not evil spirits masking themselves under their names. 4thly. They could not without the grossest violation of truth represent the statues and images of the Heathen deities as mere senseless materials, if they were inhabited by *any* spiritual beings whatever. 5thly. Most fallacious and dangerous would it have been in the prophets, to inculcate it perpetually upon the Israelites as a most certain and evident truth, that all the Heathen gods were imagi-

* See above, p. 125.

nary

nary beings, who had no *existence*, or no degree of *power* over mankind; without informing them at the same time, (what it concerned them much to know, if it was true,) that the real objects of the Heathen worship were possessed even of miraculous powers, which they were continually exerting to the deception of the human race. This would have been egregious trifling on a most solemn occasion, and gross prevarication: it would have been not only leaving the people in ignorance of their danger, but deceiving them into a false and fatal opinion of their safety. Include in the number of the Heathen gods whatever spirits you please, apostate angels of every rank and order, as well as human souls; that declaration of God must hold true, *They are all vanity, their works are nothing* *. If you choose to say that the prophets of God conceived the Heathen deities to be devils in the sense in which the word is used at present, you make them deny that devils have any power at all: for, in reference to all the Heathen deities, they thus admonish the Israelites, *Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good* †.

It is true, indeed, that both according to the antient and modern versions of the Bible, the Heathen gods are represented as devils in that sacred volume. But these versions do great injustice to the original, if by devils you mean a distinct order of beings from human souls. Let us examine the several passages where the Heathen gods are described as devils in the English translation.

* Isaiah xli. 29. † Jerem. x. 5.

Moses,

Moses, in his *prophetic* hymn concerning the apostacy of the Israelites, takes notice of it as a proof and aggravation of their idolatrous disposition, *that they sacrificed unto devils,* (*schedim,*) whom he calls *new gods that came newly up, whom they knew not, and their fathers feared not* *. The Psalmist in like manner thus reproaches them: *Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils* †, (*schedim.*) If all the Pagan gods were devils, why are the *schedim* distinguished from their other gods? Why are they called *new* to the Israelites, who had of old worshipped the Pagan deities ‡? Why is the worship of these *schedim* mentioned as matter of *peculiar* reproach? And if these *schedim* were devils, who have a real and extensive power over mankind, why are they called *vanities* and *idols* §? The word *schedim* is derived from a verb ‖ which signifies to *lay waste, to destroy,* and ought to have been rendered *the destroyers.* It expresses the supposed cruel nature and character of these false gods, who were thought to delight in, and who were accordingly worshipped by, *the destruction* of the human species, and who required, as appears from the context, even *the blood of their sons and daughters* ⸸. Who the gods were that were worshipped by human sacrifices, all history informs us; and so has the Psalmist in the most express terms **, *They ate the sacrifices of the dead.* They were the

* Deut xxxii. 17. † Ps. cvi. 37.

‡ Gen. xxxv. 2, 4. Josh. xxiv. 2. § Deut. xxxii. 21. Ps. cvi. 36.

‖ שדד. ⸸ Pfalm cvi. 38.

** Psalm v. 8. See the learned Mr. Merrick's Annotations on *the Psalms, p.* 218.

great

great warriors, who in their mortal state delighted in the slaughter of the human race. The revolt of the Israelites from the worship of God their *Saviour*, to that of these *wasters* and *destroyers* of mankind, argued the highest degree of folly and wickedness. This worship was *new* to the Israelites, what they had never practised either in Egypt or before they went into that country; but what they afterwards learnt of the Canaanites. Accordingly the schedim are expressly called by the Psalmist *the idols of Canaan**. What one circumstance is there that can lead us to suppose that either Moses or the Psalmist, in the forecited passages, are speaking of *devils*, in the common acceptation of that word?

The same defect either of candour or judgment our translators have shewn in the explication of another word, which they render *devils*. *They shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, seirim*, or, *sehirim* †. This prohibition of Moses to the Israelites after they had left Egypt implies that they had, during their stay there, defiled themselves with that particular species of idolatry here condemned. And from other passages of Scripture it sufficiently appears that the Israelites were no strangers to the worship of the Egyptian deities ‡. It is allowed that the word *seirim* signifies *hairy beings*, or *goats* §. And the learned Bochart

* Psalm cvi. 38. † Levit. xvii. 7.

‡ Josh. xxiv. 14. Ezek. xx. 7. ch. xxiii. 2, 3. Acts viii. 39.

§ In Levit. iv. and ch. xvi. and other places, it signifies a *goat*. In many places it signifies *hair* or *hairy*, Lev. xiii. 10, 25, 26, 30, 32. Gen. xxv. 25. Psalm lxviii. 21. The word also occurs, Isa.

xiii.

chart * has fully shewn that the *sacred* animals of Egypt were *hairy;* and that the *goat* in particular was worshipped, (on the same account as *Priapus* was amongst the *Greeks;*) and that Pan was represented under the image of this animal. It is plain, therefore, that as the *schedim* were the idols of Canaan, so the *seirim* were the idols of Egypt. This will more clearly appear from another place in which this latter word occurs: *He* (Jeroboam) *ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils,* (*seirim, the goats,*) *and for the calves he had made* †. Did Jeroboam make devils, or the statues and images of devils? The word *seirim* (*goats*) no more signifies *devils,* than the original word translated *calves,* or any other word throughout the Bible. Some very learned ‡ men indeed plead, that devils were represented by goats, because they appeared to mankind in the form of these animals. But till they produce some better authority than the reports of witches, and the fables of the Heathens concerning fauns and satyrs, in proof of the devil's appearing in the shape of goats, this plea cannot be admitted. What the historian affirms is plainly this: that Jeroboam, lately returned from Egypt, established the worship of the deities

xiii. 21, where the prophet is foretelling the utter destruction and desolation of Babylon; *The satyrs,* the seirim, *the goats* or *hairy creatures shall dance there.* i. e. it shall be inhabited by beasts, and not men. And in Is. xxxiv. 14, this word is rendered *satyrs,* where the prophet is describing the desolation of Idumea, representing it as the haunt of goats and other wild beasts.

* Hieroz. l. ii. c. 53.

† 2 Chron. xi. 15. ‡ See Patrick in particular.

of

of that country, which was eminently that of goats and calves; or at least set up the images of these animals as symbols of the Divinity. There could be no reference to devils, as this word is now understood; because the Israelites are never charged by their prophets with so detestable a species of idolatry as the worship of devils. The institution of such worship would not have suited with the policy of Jeroboam, who was desirous of attaching the Israelites to himself. Nor did the Egyptians, whose example Jeroboam copied, ever represent devils under the figures of goats and calves.

With regard to the passages in the New Testament in which the Heathen gods are styled *devils*, or (according to the original) *dæmons* *; it has been already shewn †, that thereby we are to understand such human spirits as were supposed to be converted into dæmons. It is scarce necessary to observe, that when St. Paul in these passages calls the objects of Pagan worship *dæmons*, and in other places *gods* and *lords* ‡, it is merely for the sake of describing them by their usual appellations, or to express what the Heathens believed them to be; without having any intention of allowing them any real power or divinity;

* 1 Cor. x. 20, 21, cited above, p. 127.

† Pages 127, 128, 129.

‡ *There be gods many, and lords many*, i. e. such as are so called, 1 Cor. viii. 5. The lords here spoken of answer to *Baalim* in the Old Testament, and to *dæmons* in the New, the supposed dispensers of good and evil, according to the Pagans. But Christians acknowledge only one God, and one Lord.

for

for he elsewhere upbraids them as vanities *, and mere nullities †. This likewise is the view which all the sacred writers give us of the gods of Paganism: a view absolutely inconsistent with their possessing a power of working miracles.

SECTION III.

The character and pretensions of the magicians, diviners and sorcerers of antiquity, examined; with the Scripture account concerning them. And the various pleas alleged by Christians in support of the credit and efficacy of the antient magic refuted.

It will be my business in this section to shew that the *magicians, diviners* and *sorcerers* of antiquity, who pretended, by the assistance of the Heathen deities, to foretell future events or to work miracles, are branded in Scripture as mere impostors, incapable of supporting their pretensions by any works or predictions beyond human power or skill. It is natural to suppose this, from what has been advanced in the foregoing section; but it will admit of a much fuller confirmation. In order to our clearly discerning the justice with which the Scriptures censure and explode all the Pagan pretences to prophecy and miracles, it will not be improper to investigate the false principles upon which they were founded, the knowledge of which will be of service to us on several occasions in the sequel of the argument.

* Acts xiv. 15. † 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6.

The

The magi were originally the priests of the gods *, and the professors of science, particularly physic and astrology †. They undertook to interpret dreams, to foretell future events, and to accomplish many wonderful things, by their superior knowledge of the secret powers of nature, of the virtues of plants and minerals, and of the motions and influences of the stars. Diodorus Siculus informs us, that *the priests of Egypt foretold future events by astrology, and the inspection of sacrifices* ‡. And from the same author we learn §, "that the Egyptians observed with great exactness the motions, revolutions and stations of the planets, and their respective power and operation in the generation of animals, and the production of good and evil; that they foretell very frequently future events ‖; and that by long observation they foreknow many things which are commonly thought to be beyond the reach of human knowledge." Cicero ⸸ gives

* Plato's Alcibiades, I. Lucian εν Μακροβιοις. Porphyry, in his book de Abstinent. l. iv. § 16, says, Παρα γε μεν τοις Περσαις, οι περι τα θειον σεφοι, και τουτου θεραποντες, Μαγοι μεν προσαγορευονται. See also Plato apud Apul. Apol. p. 290, and Dio Chrysostomus, orat. xxxvi. F, 499.

† Plin. Nat. Hist. l. xxx. c. 1.

‡ Δια της αστρολογιας και της ἱεροσκοπιας, p. 66, D. ed. Rhodomani.

§ Τας τε των πλανητων αστερων κινησεις και περιοδους και στηριγμους, ετι δε τας ἑκαστου δυναμεις προς τας των ζωων γενεσεις, τινων εισιν αγαθων η κακων απεργαστικαι, φιλοτιμοτατα παρατετηρηκασι, κ. τ. λ. P. 73.

‖ Particularly, scarcity and plenty, epidemical diseases, earthquakes, and comets (which have been generally thought to portend some extraordinary events), as well as the accidents of private life.

⸸ Principio Assyrii, trajectiones motusque stellarum observaverunt: quibus notatis, quid cuique significaretur memoriæ prodi-

derunt.

gives us the same account of these men, both amongst the Egyptians and other antient nations; to the former of whom, as the original discoverers, Herodotus ascribes "the ascertaining the month and day which belonged to each particular deity; and the foretelling the future dispositions and fortunes of men, by observing the day on which each person was born *." He also acquaints us †, "that when a prodigy happens, they keep an account of the events which succeed it; and conclude that when a like prodigy appears the same events will happen after it." In Cicero's first book of Divination, in which the several kinds of it are explained and defended, it is resolved into many causes very different from that of an immediate revelation from some spiritual being. He divides divination into *artificial* and *natural*. Under divination by *art* and observation, he comprehends that drawn from the inspection of the entrails of victims, the interpretation of prodigies and thunders, the use of auspices, the practices of lots and astrological predictions, and all the varieties of presages and signs. In a word, as in almost every

derunt. Chaldæi - - - - - diuturnâ observatione siderum, scientiam putantur effecisse, ut prædici posset, quid cuique eventurum, et quo quisque fato natus esset. Eandem artem etiam Ægyptii, &c. Cicero de Divinat l. i. c. 1. According to Diodorus Siculus, p. 73, the Chaldeans were a colony of Egyptians, who had been instructed in astrology by the priests of Egypt.

* Euterpe, c. 82.

† Γενομενου γαρ τερατος, φυλασσουσι γραφομενοι τω αποβαινον και ην κοτε υστερον παραπλησιον τουτω γενηται, κατα ταυτο νομιζουσι αποβησεσθαι. Herodot. ubi supra.

object

object they looked for significations of the divine purposes, and the presages or indications of future events; so in the right understanding of these *external* signs consisted divination by art. By *natural* divination (which was *internal*) Cicero means the foresight of future events by the mind under a particular emotion and agitation; as in *dreaming*, or when actuated by *vaticinations* or *prophesyings by fury*; and such *oracles* as proceeded from a *divine instinct and afflatus* *. It was thought that divination by fury (or when the mind was in an ecstasy) might be excited by certain vapours or exhalations of the earth; and that a draught of water from a particular spring would render persons oracular and prophetical †. It was also asserted that prodigies and signs might

* Cicero de Divinat. l. i. c. 2, 6, 18, 49, 55.

† Of the *waters* which inspired the poets and prophets, mention is made by Statius Silv. l. ii. 6. Et de Pieriis vocalem fontibus undam; by Anacreon, xiii. Λαλον πιοντες ὑδωρ; by Tacitus, Hausta fontis arcani aqua, - - - - edit responsa; (Annals, l. ii. c. 54) and by Pliny, l. ii. c. 103. l. v. c. 29. *Oracular exhalations* are spoken of in Cicero de Div. l. i. c. 50. Credo etiam anhelitus quosdam fuisse terrarum, quibus inflatæ mentes oracula funderent. The strange agitations into which the goats of Coretas and afterwards Coretas himself fell, upon their approaching the top of a cavern on the hill of Parnassus, and receiving the influence of the subterranean blast, gave occasion to the building the temple and establishing the famous oracle at Delphi. It was supposed that *that virtue of the earth, which agitates the mind of the priestess of Apollo with a divine afflatus, may in length of time vanish.* Potest vis illa terræ, quæ mentem Pythiæ divino afflatu concitabat, evanuisse vetustate, ut quosdam exaruisse amnes, aut in alium cursum contortos et deflexos videmus. C. xix. Strabo likewise,

might be procured by discipline *. So that divination was a science in which they thought themselves sure of success if they proceeded according to certain established rules.

We are not, however, from hence to infer, as some have done, that the antient magicians or priests were mere naturalists and astrologers. There have indeed been

likewise, speaking concerning the Delphic Oracle, says, There issued out of a cavity πνευμα ενθουσιαστικον, *an enthusiastic gale* or *wind*, rendering persons prophetical. But this matter is treated at large in Plutarch de Defectu Oraculorum, where he allows indeed that dæmons might be appointed by the gods to preside over divination and oracles, (p. 418, D. et p. 436, F.) and to be the guardians of the temperature of those exhalations to which they are ascribed; but at the same time it is asserted that the soul is naturally endued with the faculty of divining, and that certain exhalations of the earth were the means of exciting that prophetic power or virtue. This *prophetical blast* or *spirit of divination* (for it is called μαντικον πνευμα και πνευμα, p. 432.) was thought to owe its virtue to the Sun or Apollo, (for they were both esteemed to be the same god, p. 433, D. p. 434, F.) When the inspiration was too strong, the prophetess was said to be possessed with a *dumb and evil spirit*, p. 438, B. vide p. 431—438. From Ammianus Marcellinus we learn, that divination was ascribed to the *spirit of all the elements, and to the substantial powers, which were appeased by different rites, and over which the goddess Themis was said to preside.* Elementorum omnium spiritus, utpote perennium corporum præsentiendi (*al.* præsentienti) motu semper et ubique vigens, ex his quæ per disciplinas varias affectamus, participat nobiscum munera divinandi: et substantiales potestates ritu diverso placatæ, velut ex perpetuis fontium venis vaticina mortalitati suppeditant verba, quibus numen præesse dicitur Themidis: quam ex eo, quòd fixa fatali lege decreta præscire facit in posterum, quæ τιθεμενα sermo Græcus appellat, ita cognominatam, in cubili solioque Jovis vigoris vivifici theologi veteres collocarunt. Auguria et auspicia non volucrum

arbitrio

been Atheists and Christians who have been much addicted to divination and astrology †; but these arts amongst the Pagan nations were founded in their system of theology. Great things, it was thought, might be produced in nature; but not for that reason without the gods: for they had deified all the parts and powers of nature ‡, and more especially the heavenly bodies; ascribing to the latter not only life and intel-

arbitrio futura nescientium colliguntur: (nec enim hoc vel insipiens quisquam dicet) sed volatus avium dirigit Deus, ut rostrum sonans, aut prætervolans pinna turbido meatu vel leni futura prænonstret. — Extis item pecudum attenti fatidicis, in species converti suetis innumeras, accidentia sciunt.—Aperiunt tunc quoque ventura, cum æstuant hominum corda, sed loquuntur divina. Sol enim (ut aiunt Physici) mens mundi, nostras mentes ex sese velut scintillas diffunditans, cùm eas incenderit vehementius, futuri conscias reddit. Unde Sibyllæ crebrò se dicunt ardere, torrente vi magna flammarum. Ammianus Marcellinus, l. i. c i. p. 204, 205. ed. Gronov.

* Cumque magna vis videretur esse---in monstris procurandis in haruspicum disciplina. Cicero de Div. l. i. c. 2. See Liv. l. xxii. c. 44, cited below, ch. iii. sect. iv, article 1.

† Le Clerc de l'Incrédulité, ch. i. p. 32. and Mr. Bayle sur une Comète.

‡ See the beginning of the preceding section. Lord Bolingbroke represents inspiration, according to the Pagan idea of it, merely as a *natural* phænomenon, and as grounded on a *physical* principle, the intoxicating wind or vapour explained above; whereas from the passage in Cicero's first book of Divination, c. 19, cited in p. 165, note †, it appears that that very vapour was considered as a *divine* afflatus. See his philosophical works, vol. i. Essay 1. It must be acknowledged, however, that lord Bolingbroke was in this instance misled by men more learned than himself, who have considered that as *natural* magic (according to the modern acceptation of it) in which *dæmons* were not thought to be concerned; without reflecting that what we now call *inanimate nature* was regarded by the antient Heathens as *animated* and *divine*.

ligence,

ligence, but a *fore-perceiving motion**, and a sovereign influence on every thing here below. This notion lay at the foundation of divination by art. With regard to natural divination, as by fury, for instance, excited by certain exhalations; this was founded on a supposition of the divinity of the earth, out of which those exhalations are generated, and of the sun (called the mind of the world), to which they owe their virtue†. The human soul itself (which was thought to be *a particle of the divine air* or *spirit, to be taken out from God*‡, and to have existed from eternity,) was believed to have a presaging faculty, which exerted itself under several favourable circumstances§. As from the imagined existence of these gods they concluded there must be divination, so from the apprehended reality of divination they confirmed themselves in the belief of the existence of the gods‖. Hence Maimonides reproaches every magician as an idolater⸸; and Pliny ascribes all the splendor of magic to religion**. The Heathens had other gods besides the objects of nature, viz. dæmons, or deified

* Perennium corporum præsentiendi (*al.* præsentienti) motu, &c. Ammianus Marcellinus, cited in note, p. 166.

† Plutarch de Defectu Orac. p. 436, E. See also note †, p. 165, and note ‡, p. 177.

‡ Ex ipso Deo decerptus, ex universâ mente delibatus. Cicero's Tusc. Quæst. v. & de Senectute.

§ Cicero de Divinat. l. i. c. 5, 31, 49, 51, 59.

‖ Si divinatio sit, dii sint; & si dii sint, sit divinatio. Cicero de Nat. Deor.

⸸ Mor. Nevoch p. 445. Omnis magus citra dubium est idololatra.

** Nat. Hist. l. xxx. c. 12.

human spirits; and from their subordinate ministry and mediation, and that of wicked spirits, divination, prophecy and magic were thought to proceed*. The assistance or influence of the gods was obtained by a great variety of rites and sacrifices, adapted to their respective natures†; by the use of charms and superstitious words‡, by ceremonies and supplications. Sometimes we find the power of inchanting ascribed to noxious herbs and drugs§, but not exclusively of the assistance of the gods, who were invoked to give them efficacy‖. The magicians pretended, in the proper use of their art, (for it was

* Herodot. l. ii. c. 83. Plat. in Sympos. in Epinomide, in Phædro; Porphyr. apud Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. iv, v, vi. et de Abstinentia, l. ii. Jamblich de Myst. Apul. Apol. Id. de Deo Socrat. Plutarch. de Defect. Orac. cited in note †, p. 165—6, et Pythagoras apud Diogen. Laërt. in Vita Pythag. n. 32. p. 514.

† Ritu diverso placatæ. Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxi. init.

‡ The famous *Ephesian Letters*, which were certain barbarous words used as charms, may be seen in Hesychius, or in Dr. Sykes's Inquiry, p. 61. See his Further Inquiry, p. 66. Ovid says,

Carmina sanguinea deducunt cornua lunæ,
Et revocant niveos solis euntis equos.

§ Thus the witch in Virgil, Ecl. viii. says,

Has herbas, atque hæc Ponto mihi lecta venena
Ipse dedit Mœris; nascuntur plurima Ponto.
His ego sæpe lupum fieri, et se condere sylvis
Mœrin, sæpe animas imis excire sepulchris,
Atque satas alio vidi traducere messes.

‖ Theocritus, Id. ii. They likewise thought Quamvis plantam suam habere stellam, quemadmodum et omnibus animalibus et metallis certa sidera adscribunt. Maimon. Mor. Nevoc. l. iii. c. 37.

taught as such,) to a power of *compelling** the gods to execute their desires and commands.

Upon the principles here explained, all the pretences amongst the Pagans to divination and sorcery (and every other† species of magic) were founded; whether those pretences were carried on by the priest, under the protection and for the service of the state‡; or for the purposes of private gain by the lowest orders of magicians§, conjurers and witches, generally (though seldom effectually) proscribed or prohibited

* They acted cæca coactorum numinum violentiâ. Enchantresses boasted that they had power over the gods. Lucan. l. vi. ver. 606, 741. Ovid. Metamor. l. vii. ver. 192.

† I have taken no notice of that species of magic called *theurgy*, (θεουργια,) because it principally consisted in a fanatical pretence to communion with dæmons, and a vision of their essence. So far as it was thought to invest those who practised it with the power of the gods, it differed in one respect from that sort of magic calle sorcery (γοητεια); *theurgy* invoking only the *benevolent* divinities; *sorcery* the *mischievous ones*, whose operations were suitable to their nature.

‡ That the public ministers of religion practised sorcery as well as divination, is certain from their cursing the enemies of the state, and devoting them to destruction.

§ They were rather more extravagant, as well as more mischievous, than the established priests; inasmuch as they pretended to know other people's fortunes, to discover what was lost, to bewitch, to procure love, to walk upon the water, to fly through the air, to raise or lay storms, to turn themselves or others into any shapes, to remove corn from one field into another, to draw down the moon, to raise ghosts, to stop the course of rivers, and to kill or cure both men and cattle, &c. See Ovid's Metamor. l. vii. ver. 199.

by

by law *. Whatever difference there might be between them, the Scripture brands them all as shameless impostors, and reproaches them with an utter inability of discovering or accomplishing any thing supernatural. The prophet Isaiah having foretold the destruction of Babylon, so famous all over the world for divination and astrology, thus proceeds to insult that proud city †: *Stand now with thine inchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy councils: let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up, and save thee from those things which shall come upon thee,* from that destruction, which, he tells them, with their various methods of divination and sorcery, they would be unable either to foresee or prevent. The same prophet thus warns the Israelites against having recourse to the Heathen diviners for instruction: *Should not a people seek unto their god?* Whom then should you consult but the God of Israel? *For the living to the dead* ‡*?* that is, Is it not absurd to consult the dead concerning the state of the living, of which the former are ignorant? Or the meaning may be, Instead of the living God, will you have recourse to the dead? The Heathen gods were

* Concerning conjurers and fortune-tellers, who were called *mathematici*, Tacitus says, They are a *fallacium* sort of men, quod in civitate nostra & vetabitur semper, & retinebitur. Hist. l. i. c. 22.

† Isaiah xlvii. 11, 12, 13.

‡ Isaiah viii. 18, 19.

dead

dead men: and the oracles were placed in their temples, which were their sepulchres. Moreover, the Heathen diviners pretended to call up the souls of the departed, which were supposed to possess a prophetic virtue; nay, by an inspection of the entrails of boys who had suffered a violent death, they hoped to dive into futurity*. The language of Isaiah implies, that it was unpardonable stupidity, in any or all these ways, to expect any instruction or information from the dead. When Jeremiah thus warns the Jews, *Learn not the way of the Heathen, and be not afraid of the signs of heaven*, whose appearances were thought to portend particular calamities; he pronounces *the customs of the Heathens vain*, on account of the utter ignorance and impotence of their gods †, who could not be supposed to convey to others that knowledge and power which they did not possess themselves. And thus Jeremiah describes the prophets who were not sent of God, *They prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart* ‡. On other occasions he addresses the people of God in the following strain: *Hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your inchanters, nor to your sorcerers. For they prophesy a lie unto you* §. The

* To these methods of divination Justin Martyr refers, Apol. i. p. 27, ed. Thirlb. Νεκυομαντειαι μεν γαρ, και ὡς αδωφθερων παιδων εποπτευσεις, και ψυχων ανθρωπινων κλησεις.

† Jerem. x. 2, 3—8, 14. Compare Is. xli. 23, 24.

‡ Jerem. xiv. 14.

§ Ch. xxvii. 9, 10.

sacred

sacred writers do at all times brand those who exercised the arts of divination and sorcery, *as liars**; and the arts themselves *as lying vanities*†, the most absurd and groundless delusions imaginable. What stronger language could they have used, supposing them to have believed (as they certainly did believe) all the magic of the antients to have had no other support than human artifice and falsehood?

Notwithstanding this clear decision of the point by the divine oracles, many Christians have contended for the supernatural power and efficacy of Pagan divination and sorcery. This point was maintained by the Fathers in particular, who ascribed the efficacy of magic to evil dæmons; as some of the Heathen philosophers also did‡. It was a very prevailing opinion in the primitive church§, that magicians and necromancers, both amongst the Gentiles and heretical Christians, had each their particular dæmons perpetually attending on their persons, and obsequious to their commands, by whose help they could call up the souls of the dead, foretell future events, and perform miracles. "In the case of idolatry, they

* Isaiah xliv. 25. Jerem. l. 36.

† Psalm xxxi. 6. Jonah ii. 8.

‡ Eusebius's Præp. Ev. l. v. c. 4, has this inscription, Περι του πονηρων δαιμονων ειναι, τα παρα τοις εθνεσι μαντεια τε και χρηστηρια. And St. Austin (de Civ. Dei, l. viii. c. 16.) says, Inter cætera etiam dicit [Apuleius] ad eos [dæmones] pertinere divinationes augurum, aruspicum, vatum, atque somniorum. Vid Minuc. Fel. p. 30, ed. Lugd. Bat.; and see above, p. 169, note *. Porphyry de Abstin. l. ii. § 41. p. 85, says, δια μεντοι των εναντιων και ἡ πασα γοητεια εκτελειται.

§ See Dr. Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 66.

imagined

imagined dæmons to assume the names and to act the parts of the Heathen gods; and in magic to assume the forms of departed souls, and to appear under the names of those who were called up from the dead; and, as such, to answer all questions which should be demanded of them*." As what was urged above† against the former supposition, concludes with equal force against the latter; I need not shew how inconsistent this is with the Scripture account of the magicians, as utterly unable to support their pretensions by any works or predictions beyond human power and skill. It will be necessary, however, to examine what is alleged in support of the contrary doctrine.

1. It is alleged "that the *names* by which the several sorts of diviners are described in Scripture imply a communication with spiritual beings." Those who urge this argument do not always distinguish between the Scriptures in their original languages, and in the translation now in use, which (like most other translations, whether antient or modern) was made by persons deeply tinctured with the vulgar superstition, and often on that account does great injustice to the original. That phrase‡, *a familiar spirit*, or *familiar spirits*,

* Dr. Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 70. † Page 153.

‡ This phrase (which occurs Lev. xix. 31. ch. xx. 6, 7. Deut. xviii. 11. 1 Sam. xxviii. 3, 7, 8, 9. 2 Kings xxi. 6. ch. xxiii. 24. 1 Chron. x. 13. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. Is. xxix 4. ch. viii. 19.) has nothing in the original to answer to it but אוֹב *ob* (or *oboth* in the plural number) which signifies *a bottle* (which amongst the antients somewhat resembled our bladders), Job xxxix. 19; and hence came to denote a person whose belly is distended as a bottle, and is applied particularly to those persons who delivered oracles as from their

spirits, which occurs so often, is thought to be an instance of this kind. But even supposing the original word to be rightly translated, it cannot be inferred from hence, that the sacred writers believed that any persons were really assisted and inspired by a familiar spirit. They could not allow, and meant only to characterize, their pretensions. The Scripture, as it describes the Heathen deities by their usual appellations, (gods, lords, dæmons,) which are expressive not of what they really were in themselves, but of what their votaries believed them to be*; so it calls all

their bellies, swelled, as it was believed, by some divine afflatus. Accordingly, it is generally translated by the LXX ἐγγαστριμύθους: a word which signifies those who speak with their mouths shut, so as to seem to speak out of their bellies. But though the word, according to its strictest etymology, might denote only *a bottle-bellied person*; yet as it is the word used to describe those who pretended that their bellies were inflated by a divine energy, by the persons who believed the reality of those pretences; our translators are not, perhaps, wholly to be condemned for the manner in which they render it. (See below, ch. iv. sect. ii.)

But it is not so easy to excuse them for the manner in which they have acquitted themselves on another occasion. I refer to their representing Simon, the magician, as *bewitching* the Samaritans; and hereby giving a sense to the word ἐξίστων, Acts viii. 9, different from what they themselves have put upon ἐξίστατο, in the 13th verse; which they justly render *he wondered*. Simon had been exercising the magical arts in Samaria, and thereby *raising the astonishment* of the inhabitants. But the sight of genuine miracles discovered at once the vanity of the most artful imitations of them, and *astonished* and convinced Simon himself, who had so long *raised the astonishment* of others. Vid. Schmidium ad Act. viii. 13.

* See above, p. 161. In like manner Jeremiah calls particular celestial

all those persons who pretended to any intercourse with the gods, by their common names, (prophets, magicians, necromancers, diviners, sorcerers, monthly prognosticators, &c.) though these names were at first assumed by the pretenders themselves, to enable them more successfully to carry on their impostures, or conferred on them by the superstition of the people. Whatever pretensions or claims these names may imply, it is sufficient that the Scriptures deny them any answerable powers or performances. And therefore when St. Luke speaks of the damsel at Philippi as *possessed with a spirit of divination*, or *of Apollo**, he meant only to describe her pretensions, and the common belief concerning her. Dr. Sykes was of opinion that this woman had merely acquired a trick of speaking inwardly, as from her belly, by the discovery of which she was disabled from playing it any longer; while others plead that she was really inspired. Both parties equally forget that *a spirit of Python* or *Apollo* denoted in the language of antiquity, not only the inspiration of Apollo, but also that raving and madness which were the effect of that supposed inspira-

lestial appearances *the signs of heaven*, because the Heathens regarded them as such, ch x. 2. And who scruples to say, Such a person tells fortunes, when nothing more is meant than that he pretends to do it?

* Acts xvi. 16, 18. Πνευμα πυθωνος, *a spirit of Python* or *Apollo*. This is manifestly the language of the Pagans, which St. Luke adopted, because it served to describe the case of the damsel. He cannot be supposed to allow that Apollo (whether the word here denotes a hero god, or the sun,) imparted to her the power of prophesying.

tion

tion and possession*. And therefore the miracle performed upon the damsel, or the casting out of her the spirit of Apollo, consisted in curing her madness, and restoring her to her right mind; in consequence of which the people would consider her no longer as inspired or possessed.

2. The *laws of Moses*† against divination and witchcraft are thought to prove the *efficacy* of these arts; though those laws do really prove nothing more than their execrable *wickedness* and *impiety*. By the credit of these arts the people were drawn away from the true God to false ones. The arts themselves were founded upon the principles of idolatry‡; and the

* No prophetess was thought to be inspired but when she was mad and raving. ὁ τι γαρ δη εν Δελφοις προφητις, και τε εν Δωδωνῃ ιερειαι, μαινομεναι, κ. τ. λ. Platon. Phædr. p. 1220, C, D, E. ουδεις γαρ ενθους αφαπτεται μαντικης ενθεου και αληθους. Id. Tim. p. 1074, D. It appears from Meric Casaubon, (cited by Dr. Macknight, Harmony, vol. i. p. 179, 2d ed.) that to the natural diseases of melancholy, madness, epilepsy, &c. enthusiastic divinatory fits are (thought to be) incidental; and that when the disease is cured the enthusiasms go away.

† Exod. xxii. 18. Lev. xix. 26, 31. ch. xx. 27. Deut. xviii. 10, 11. Would it not be in vain to make laws against those whose miraculous power could prevent their execution?

‡ This was proved above concerning divination, p. 167. Witchcraft also, and all magical rites, had a reference to the heavenly bodies. Nullum autem magicum opus sine siderum respectu & consideratione potest perfici. Maimon. Mor. Nevoc. pars iii. c. 37. He farther observes, that the belief of their power to hurt or help necessarily led mankind to worship them. Accordingly both witchcraft and divination are joined with idolatry, 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23. Isaiah ii. 6—8. ch. xlvii. 12, 13. Jerem. xxviii 9, 10. Ezek. xxi. 21, 22. Nahum iii. 4. Micah v. 12.

rites and placatory sacrifices which attended them were in their very nature acts of idolatry, that is, of high treason against the Jewish state, over which Jehovah presided as supreme Governor. It was necessary therefore that every magician should be put to death, because every magician was an idolater. I add, that many of the rites of magic were flagrant immoralities; for those who antiently practised witchcraft mingled dangerous drugs with their compositions, and, on account of the real mischief they hereby did, are often ranked with *poisoners**. Amongst other detestable methods of divination, one was the murder of infants and others, who were sacrificed on purpose, that by raking into their entrails they might gain an insight into futurity; as appears from the testimony of Herodotus, Cicero, Lucan, Juvenal, Tacitus, Philostratus, Porphyry †, and many other learned Pagans; as well as from the intimations of the sacred writers ‡. Sorcerers and sorceresses were supposed

* The Hebrew word *mecasheph'im*, which we translate *sorcerers*, the LXX render by φαρμακους.

† Jacobus Geusius, in his book entitled Victimæ humanæ, pars i. cap. 19, 20, 21, cites these and other Heathen writers, to shew how very frequently human sacrifices were employed by those who practised divination and magic. The *Cimbri* ripped open the bowels, and from them formed a judgment of future events. Strabo, l. vii. p. 451. (compare Porphyry de Abst. l. ii. § 51) The *Celtæ* divined by the agonies and convulsions of the men who were offered for a sacrifice, and from the effusion of their blood. Diodor. Sic. l. v. p. 308.

‡ Deut. xviii. 10, 11. 2 Kings xvii. 17. ch. xxi. 6. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. Ezek. xx. 26, 31.

to

to perform all their amazing works by the assistance of the souls of young boys, who had been violently put to death for that purpose, and then called up from the dead by ineffable adjurations*. Now might it not be very fit, severely to punish these *external acts of sorcery* †, without entering into the question, whether

* In Horace's epodes, l. v. ep. 5. ver. 12, 13, the person murdered by the sorceress Canidia is puer, impube corpus. The author of that very antient though spurious work, the *Recognitions of St. Clemens*, represents Simon Magus as saying, Pueri incorrupti, et violenter necati, animam adjuramentis ineffabilibus evocatam adsistere mihi feci; et per ipsam fit omne quod jubeo. Ed. Cotelerii, p. 513. See Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. vii. c. 10. Chrysostom and others, cited by Cotelerius in his note on this passage of Clemens. This kind of divination was called βριφομαντεια. On such rites of magic, see Broukhusius on Tibullus, i. 11. 45. and Fabricius, Bibl. Antiq. p. 417, 419.

† This is not a groundless distinction; for the laws of Moses are levelled wholly against the *external acts* of sorcery, as appears from all the laws referred to in p. 177, note †, and particularly from Deut. xviii. 10, 11, 14, *There shall not be found amongst you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an inchanter, or a witch*, &c. Amongst those who believed the supernatural power of sorcery, laws were framed against its supposed *effects*. The Roman law forbad bewitching the fruits of the earth, and drawing their neighbours corn into their own fields by charms. Apud nos in duodecim tabulis cavetur, ne quis alienos fructus excantassit. Seneca, Nat. Quæst. l. iv. c. 7. Seneca adds, "Our ignorant ancestors imagined that showers could be procured or driven away by charms; but we need not go to any school of philosophy to teach us otherwise." As the Romans became more enlightened, the style of their law was altered. The Lex Cornelia, usually cited as a law against sorcery, forbids *poisoning*, et mala sacrificia, Liv. Decad. i. l. 8. which may serve both to explain and vindicate the laws of Moses for the punishments denounced against the same crimes,

whether they were or were not of any *efficacy* to procure supernatural assistance?

3. Pretensions to divination (it is farther pleaded) could not have supported *their credit in all the Heathen nations, and through all ages*, if some instances of true divination had not happened, however rare we may suppose them to have been. This last argument (which was considered in a former chapter*) proceeds on a supposition notoriously false; for diviners of all sorts, observers of times, inchanters, witches, wizards, ventriloquists, and necromancers, did not support their credit in the manner here alleged, and never were in any reputation with Pagans of a liberal mind and education. And from Christians, whose zeal for the credit of antient magic thus transports them beyond the bounds of truth, we appeal to Heathens of understanding and virtue, in vindication of the censure passed upon every species of magic by the prophets of God. Cicero, the greatest master of reason and learning among the Romans, and in all respects a very able judge of this subject, condemns the oracles of the Heathen gods as either *false*, or *obscure*, or *ambiguous*, (so as to require other oracles to explain them,) or as true only by *chance* or *accident*†. We find both Sophocles and Euripides upon the

crimes, and to shew how unreasonably this divine legislator has been reproached, on account of these laws, with a spirit of persecution.

* Chap. ii. sect. ii.

† Partim falsis, ut ego opinor; partim casu vesis, ut fit in omni oratione sapissime; partim ἀσαφείας et obscuris, ut interpret egeat

the public theatre at Athens (a city greatly addicted to superstition and idolatry) passing a similar censure upon the Pagan soothsayers and diviners*, or representing them as men actuated only by the love of money†. Pindar in his Olympic odes‡, which were all composed to be sung on the most public occasions, and probably at the solemn sacrifices offered to the gods, affirms *that they have bestowed upon mortals no sure presage of things to come.* And in still earlier times Hesiod§ had maintained the same opinion. What various rites of superstition were practised by such Heathens as were lost to all reflection, whereby they guessed what should happen to them, we learn from Theophrastus in his characters of superstition, and from Plutarch in his book on the same subject‖: but we find them derided

egeat interprete, et sors ipsa ad sortes referenda sit; partim ambiguis. De Divinat. l. ii. c. 56. In the 25th chapter he argues against divination by *art*, in the whole extent of it, from the *obscurity* of the signs. It appears likewise from Cicero in the same book, (as also from Strabo, l. xv.) that astrology was rejected by astronomers and the best philosophers.

* —— Τις δε μαντις εστ' ανηρ;
Ος οιδ' αληθη, πολλα δε ψευδη λεγει
Τυχαν' οταν δε μη τυχη, διωλεται. In Aul. ver. 956.

† Το μαντικον γαρ παν φιλαργυρον γενος. Sophocles Antigone, 1607. Vide etiam Oed. Tyr. 395. & Euripid. Iphig. in Aul. 520.

‡ Ode xii. l. 10.

§ Μαντις δ' ουδεις εστιν επιχθονιων ανθρωπων
Οστις αν ειδειη Ζηνος νοον αιγιοχοιο.
Hesiod. Fragment.

‖ See also Maimonides de Idololatria, c. xi. § 4, 5, 6.

by Terence in his Phormio*. Nor were there any men of understanding who gave countenance to any of the modes of divination, unless from a principle of compliance with vulgar prejudices, or for reasons of state†. Amongst the Heathens no imposture was censured as unlawful, which was judged to be useful‡. With regard to sorcery; the pretended effects of it, as they are described by the Heathen poets§, are too extravagant to be confuted, and their best writers treat the art itself with derision. In proof of this, I appeal to Horace‖, Cicero⸸, Seneca**, Dion Cassius††, Quintus Curtius‡‡, Tacitus§§, and Pliny‖‖, besides others already taken notice of; and indeed to all the Heathens whose understandings were not totally depraved by superstition. The miracles said to

* Act, iv. sc. 4.

† Existimo jus augurum, etsi divinationis opinione principio constitutum sit, tamen postea reipublicæ causâ conservatum ac retentum. Cicero de Divinat. l. ii. c. 35. see also c. 33. From the same political motives, the wisest Heathens countenanced the popular idolatry. See August. de Civit. Dei, l. iv. c. 3, 22, 27, 31.

‡ Plutarch. l. de Socrat. Genio, p. 579, 580.

§ Ovid. Met. l. vii. fab. 2. l. 199, &c. Virgil. Ecl. viii. Æn. iv. Lucan. l. de Bello civili vi. Manil. l. i. Tibullus, l. i. eleg. 2. See above, p. 170, note §.

‖ Epist. lib. ii. ep. 2. l. 208.

⸸ De Nat. Deor. l. i. Cum poetarum autem errore conjungere licet portenta magorum, Ægyptiorumque in eodem genere dementiam. And in his 2d book of divination, where he delivers his own sentiments, he says, in reference to magical operations, Num igitur me cogis etiam fabulis credere? &c.

** Nat. Quæst. l. iv. c. 67.

†† L. lii. p. 490.

‡‡ L. vii. c. 4.

§§ L. i. c. 22.

‖‖ Nat. Hist. l. xxx. c. 1, 2, 3. l. xxvi. c. 4.

be

be wrought amongst the Pagans were not believed by the historians* who relate them; and the philosophers treated them as fables†. If magic was able to support some reputation in ages of gross ignorance, through the superior knowledge and fraudulent contrivances of those who exercised it; yet whenever learning revived and became general, it never failed to sink into contempt. It did so in the same age in which the Gospel gained a general establishment by the credit of undeniable miracles. In vain did the Roman emperor Nero, by discovering the most extravagant fondness for magic, and sending for the most eminent professors of it from every quarter of the world, endeavour to support its sinking reputation. Pliny informs us, that all that Nero gained by his attempts was an entire conviction of the folly of magic. And he observes himself, that if at any time magicians perform extraordinary things, it is owing to the efficacy of their drugs, not of their magic art‡.

* Quæ ante conditam, condendamve urbem, poeticis magis decora fabulis, quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis traduntur, ea nec affirmare nec refellere in animo est. Datur hæc venia antiquitati, ut miscendo humana divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat. Liv. Procem. After reciting several prodigies, Livy adds, Et alia ludibria oculorum, auriumque, credita pro veris, l. xxii. c. 44. See Liv. l. xxiv. c. 10. l. xxii. c. 3. et Quintus Curtius, l. ix. c. 1.

† In reference to Heathen miracles, Cicero says, l. ii. de Divinat. Nihil debet esse in philosophia commentitiis fabellis loci. Concerning Cato he tells us in the same book, Mirari se aiebat, quod non rideret aruspex, aruspicem cum vidisset.

‡ In his veneficas artes pollere, non magicas. Nat. Hist. l. xxx. c. 2.

Now,

Now, inasmuch as magic did constantly lose its credit, just in the degree in which men exercised their understandings, it certainly was not supported by any supernatural power.

SECTION IV.

Concerning the false prophets as spoken of in Scripture, in which the following passages are explained, Deut. xiii. 1—5. Matt. xxiv. 24. 2 Thess. ii. 9. Rev. xiii. 13, 14; *together with several others relative to the false teachers in the apostolic age.*

THAT the pretences to inspiration and miracles, made by false prophets, in support of error and idolatry, should be branded in Scripture as the sole effects of human craft and imposture, is what might be naturally expected from those writings, which do not allow the power of inspiring predictions, or of working miracles, to any Pagan deity, or to any evil spirit. For, from what other quarter was it ever imagined that a false prophet could receive any supernatural support? It will be necessary, however, to examine the several passages of Scripture which speak to this point, inasmuch as they have had a sense assigned them absolutely inconsistent with the principles already established.

I.

I shall begin with considering that celebrated warning of Moses to the Israelites: *If there arise amongst you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee*

thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, (which thou hast not known,) and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto his words:—for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart.—And that prophet, and that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death, because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage *.

It has been contended that Moses, in this passage, is laying down this general rule, viz. "that the true *divinity* of miracles is to be determined by the *doctrines* which they are applied to confirm." It is farther asserted, that the Jews are here required to make *his law* in particular the standard by which to judge of miracles; to disallow the force and evidence of those which opposed that law, and even to put to death the prophet who performed them, because he taught the worship of a strange god †. The learned Dr. Benson ‡ and Dr. Lardner §, as well as many others,

* Deut. xiii. 1—5.

† Hence Rousseau concluded that the Pagans had an equal right to put the apostles to death, for preaching up to them the worship of a strange god, though they proved their mission by miracles.

‡ Life of Christ, p. 202.

§ Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. i. p. 255, 256. Though this judicious, candid and excellent writer asserts that Moses here refers to miracles, yet, contrary to his usual method, he produces no proof of his assertion. Nay, he allows it to be a rule of Scripture, that

others, were of opinion, that Moses here puts a case which never would happen; but if it did happen, and a miracle was performed to induce the Israelites to worship other gods, it was to be disregarded. Here it is natural to inquire, whether any prophet did ever arise amongst the Israelites, who performed real miracles to draw them into idolatry. If no such prophet did arise, (and there is not the least reason to believe there did,) how needless was it to caution the Israelites against him! Nay, Moses knew that it was impossible any such prophet should arise; because he appropriates all miracles to God *, and denies that the Heathen deities could support their claims by any supernatural works. He always represents them as senseless idols, and could not therefore allow them any power or dominion over mankind. On all occasions he appeals to miracles, as absolute proofs of the divinity of Jehovah, and of his own mission *; and can he, without gross self-contradiction, here represent these works as common both to the true God and to rival deities; to a divine messenger and a false prophet? And indeed why should not a real miracle equally gain credit to both or neither? be of as great weight *against* Moses as *for* him? Moses neither does nor could allow that an idolatrous prophet would perform works truly miraculous: and the very order to put such a prophet to death, shews that there was

that if any man proposes and performs a miracle in proof of his mission, it would be decisive in his favour: and yet in the case stated above he supposes that a miracle determines nothing.

* This will be shewn below, ch. iii. sect. v. and ch. iv. sect. i.

no

no danger of his being protected from punishment by a miraculous power.

The Jewish lawgiver here refers, not to true miracles, but to those *divinations* amongst the Pagans by which the credit of idolatry was supported. Amongst other methods of divination, one was by the interpretation of *portents, ostents, prodigies, monsters* *, rare and extraordinary appearances and occurrences, which were falsely deemed supernatural, and thought to presignify † future events. These are *the signs and wonders* ‡ here spoken of by Moses, and which it was the

* The several species of divination are enumerated in Cicero de Nat. Deor. l. ii. c. 65. Multa cernunt haruspices; multa augures provident; multa oraculis declarantur; multa vaticinationibus; multa somniis; multa portentis.

† See the passage from Herodotus, cited above, p. 164, and note ‡, below.

‡ אות *oth, a sign,* and מופת *mopheth,* a wonder, like the correspondent Greek words σημειον and τερας, though often applied to miraculous works, yet very commonly bear a different application. *Oth* denotes any *mark* or *token,* Gen. xvii. 11. Exod. xii. 13. Ezek. xx. 12, 20; and so likewise does the word σημειον, Matt. xxvi. 48. Luke ii. 12. Rom. iv. 11. 2 Thess. iii. 17. Nor can *mopheth* denote a miracle, Ps. lxxi. 7. Is. xx. 3. Ezek. xii. 6. ch. xxiv. 24; or τερας in the same passages of the LXX. *Oth* and *mopheth* are both applied to such things as point out and presignify future events, 1 Kings xiii. 3. Is. viii. 18. ch. xx. 3. Ezek. xii. 6, 11. ch. xxiv. 24, 27; and so are both σημειον and τερας, Luke xxi. 11, 25. Acts ii. 19. In Ælian's Var. Hist. l. xii. c. 57, we are told, that when Alexander led his forces against Thebes, οι μεν θεοι σημεια αυτοις και τερατα απεστειλλον, προσημαινοντες τας περι αυτων ὁσον ουδεπω τυχας, "the gods sent *signs* and *wonders* amongst them, presignifying their impending fate." Polybius also (lib. iii. c. x. p. 365, l. 9, cited by Raphelius on Matt. xxiv. 24.) uses both these words together in the same

the business of the Pagan prophet (or interpreter of the will of the gods) and diviner by dreams to expound *. And that Moses does not here refer to any miraculous works performed *upon the spot*, but to a prodigy or sign of some future event, is farther evident from his speaking of the sign given, as a thing that *might come to pass*, or afterwards happen. To *give* a sign or a wonder, therefore, must mean, the proposing and appealing to any particular prodigy or portent, as a token or proof of a divine interposition, as a declaration of the decrees of the gods, and an indication of futurity. It is indeed supposed that the prodigy might possibly be followed by the very event it was said to presage; nevertheless Moses did not and could not admit that this completion of the prediction was a proof of any supernatural inspira-

same sense as Ælian. See also the citation from Herodotus, sect. iii. p. 164, note †, where τερας signifies a prodigy. The following passage from Livy (l. xxii. c. 44.) may serve further to explain the nature and use of prodigies: Consules duabus urbanis legionibus scriptis, supplementoque in alias lecto, priusquam ab urbe moverent, prodigia procurarunt, quæ nuntiata erant. Muros ac portas tactas, et Ariciæ etiam Jovis ædes de cælo tacta fuerat. Et alia ludibria oculorum, auriumque, credita pro veris. The prophetic sign and portent was sometimes preternatural, Homer. Il. ii. l. 308—324, but often nothing more than some very rare and uncommon accidents and occurrences, Terent. Phormio, act. iv. sc. 4. l. 24, 25, 26. Hence the Roman orator says, (de Div. l. ii.) Si quod raro fit, id portentum putandum est, sapientem esse portentum est, sapiens enim multum peperisse arbitror, quam sapientem fuisse.

* In Homer (Il. i. ver. 62.) *a prophet*, and *an expounder of dreams*, are reckoned amongst the persons capable of explaining the meaning of Apollo in sending the plague amongst the Greeks. Compare Jerem. xxvii. 9.

tion.

ion. For the Heathen gods, according to his representation of them, were as unable to foretell as they were to accomplish any thing. Predictions no less than miracles are proposed in Scripture as signs of a prophet's mission. When a prophet spoke in the name of the *true God*, and the event foretold did not come to pass, the Israelites were to conclude that the prophet spoke entirely from himself*; it being impossible that Jehovah should either be deceived himself or deceive his creatures. On the other hand, if his prediction (of such future events as human reason could not foresee) received its accomplishment, they were to regard him as a prophet†. But a person who spoke in the name of a *false* or *idol god* was to be rejected, notwithstanding the accomplishment of his (conjectural) prediction; because the deity by whom he professed to be inspired was a mere nullity, and therefore could not inspire him with any supernatural knowledge. The very supposition, that the Pagan prognosticator might in a particular instance divine aright, implies that this was not likely to be a common case, but that his predictive sign would more generally fail of its accomplishment; and consequently was nothing more than human conjecture‡.

To discern the full meaning and propriety of this

* Deut. xviii. 18—22.

† Jerem. xxviii. 9. Is. xli. 23. ch. vii. 14.

‡ Against the divinity of signs and ostents we find the Heathens objecting their obscurity, Quæ si signa deorum putanda sunt, cur tam obscura fuerunt? Cicero de Divinat. l. ii. c. 25. See above, p. 180.

prophetic admonition, we must recollect both *the temper* and *the circumstances* of the Israelites. They were continually exposed to the artifices of the numerous Heathen priests and diviners*, who, in virtue of their superior skill in the laws of nature, were able to make very probable guesses concerning some events which were thought to be beyond the reach of human foresight; and who, no doubt, by habit acquired a conjectural sagacity more than common; and who, at least, by the very frequency of their conjectures, could scarce be *always*† in the wrong. Whenever their predictions came to pass, they urged the accomplishment of their sign (sent, as they affirmed, by the gods) as a divine interposition. To facts of this nature we know the Pagans were wont to appeal. But this was not the worst of the case. Those who are strongly addicted to superstition easily give credit to every thing that seems to favour it; they remember and regard a single oracle that proves true, while they overlook the more numerous instances in which the oracles have failed. With regard to the Israelites, their whole history shews, that they had too little esteem and relish of the chaste and pure worship of the true God, and were inflamed with the love of idolatry, on account of its licentious rites, and the indulgence it allowed to their lusts. This made them an easy prey to the delusion of false prophets, and is the ground of the frequent warnings

* 1 Kings xviii. 19. Jerem. xxvii. 9, 10.

† For, as Cicero observes, (de Divinat. l ii. c. 4.) Quis est enim qui totum diem jaculans, non aliquando collimet?

against

gainst them in Scripture. Moses here puts the case s strongly as possible, when he tells them: "Suppose that a Pagan prophet or diviner should propose ome prodigy or extraordinary appearance, as a proof f the interposition of a false god, and an indication f futurity, and that the event should correspond to he prophecy; do not on this account hastily conclude hat there is any thing supernatural or miraculous in he case; neither expect that the true God should interpose* in an extraordinary manner at every turn, o prevent such occurrences as these; which he will ermit for the trial and discovery of your temper. If loubtful appearances and lucky conjectures serve you s reasons to desert his worship, this will be a full roof of your being previously disaffected to him. For ye know how amply he demonstrated his own livinity and sole dominion over nature†, (so utterly ubversive of all the groundless claims of the Heathen ods,) and laid you under the most powerful and lasting obligations to his worship and service, by those tupendous and undeniable miracles which accomlished your deliverance from the bondage of Egypt."

From this view of the passage, it appears that Moses does not make the supposition of a prophet's working real miracles in the name of the Pagan deities; nor require the Israelites to disregard such works on account of the absurdity of the doctrine

* For such purposes God might on some great occasions interpose. *He frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad,* Isaiah xliv. 25. See Psalm xxxiii. 10.

† See below, ch. iii. sect. v.

they are designed to attest. Not the most distant intimation is given, that we are in any case to make a prophet's doctrine the standard whereby to judge of the divinity of his miracles. He is here guarding the Israelites against the pretended divination and prodigies of the Pagans. And the reason he assigns, why they should not suffer themselves to be seduced by prodigies and strange events, or by the accidental completion of a conjectural prediction, into the worship of false gods, is, that the claims of Jehovah had been already established, and consequently theirs confuted, by miracles; the validity of his claims necessarily inferring the falsehood of theirs. It is to miracles alone that Moses here appeals; by this single proof he decides the question concerning the sole right of Jehovah to the worship of the Israelites. And his reasoning is designed to prove, that the sign or wonder of the prophet who announced any other god than the god of Israel could not be really supernatural. In those early ages, when eclipses, meteors, earthquakes, inundations, and all the uncommon phænomena of nature, were represented by Pagan impostors or enthusiasts as the productions of their fictitious deities, how could Moses more effectually guard the Israelites against these frauds and delusions, than by reminding them how fully Jehovah had asserted and vindicated his sole dominion over the whole natural world; and thus shewing them, that the events in question were the effects of that order and disposition which God had established at the beginning?

II. We

II.

We are in the next place to examine that warning of the Christian lawgiver to his disciples, *There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very elect**.

Here our Lord has (very erroneously, as I apprehend) been supposed to make his Gospel (just as Moses in the foregoing passage was supposed to make his Law) the criterion whereby to judge of the divinity of miracles; and to direct men to consider the like works as marks of imposture when wrought by others, which he had appealed to, when wrought by himself, as indubitable signs of a divine mission. But if miracles proved *him* to be the Messiah, must they not equally establish the claim of any *other* person to that character? Were it possible they should be wrought in confirmation of opposite claims, they would mutually destroy each other. The wonders here spoken of are emphatically styled *great;* and the end proposed by them was the deliverance of God's people; which, to a Jew at least, could not appear to be an end unworthy of a divine interposition. And therefore, supposing the miracles to have been really performed by false Christs and false prophets, the Jews must either have admitted their claims inforced by great miracles, or have rejected those of every other. At least, might it not have been expected that our Lord, to prevent the deception of his followers, would have laid down some sure and per-

* Matt. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22.

spicuous rule, to enable them to judge in what cases *great* miracles are proofs of a *divine* agency, and when they are evidences only of a *diabolical* one? When a prophet has established his own mission by miracles, is his barely *foretelling* those of his rivals and opposers a sufficient criterion whereby to judge of their author? Would it not rather be a confession that miracles are no certain signs of a divine mission?

But our Lord is not here warning his disciples against admitting the *divinity* of unquestionable miracles, but against hastily crediting the *truth* of those pretences to miracles which would be made by the persons of whom he is speaking. This appears, as well from the natural import of this prophecy in its original language, as from the history and character of the impostors to whom it refers. Christ does not say, "False prophets shall *shew**, that is, really *exhibit* and *perform*, great signs;" but (as the original word should have been rendered) "they will GIVE†," that

* Had this been our Lord's meaning, he would have expressed it, as Josephus does in the passages cited below, (p. 196, note §, and p. 197, note ‖) by the word δειξειν.

† This is the most natural sense of δωσουσι. Dr. Lardner, in a letter which is now before me, after taking notice, that although Whitby, Le Clerc, and other commentators, allow great things were done by the impostors referred to by Christ in this prediction, yet that no miracles are ascribed to them by Josephus; adds, *I shall be obliged to Mr. Farmer, if he will let me know the solution of this difficulty.* In compliance with this request, I communicated to him my explication of the word δωσουσι, which I had never met with in any writer, and which entirely solves the particular difficulty proposed by Dr. Lardner, as well as removes the general objection against the

that is, appeal to, promise or undertake to produce, such signs; using the very language of the Jewish legislator explained above, who represents a prophet as *giving** (that is, proposing and appealing to) a sign or wonder, whether it did or did not come to pass. The phrase itself does not determine, whether the sign given, be it the promise of a miracle or the prediction of an event, would be confirmed or confuted when it was expected to be accomplished. It might be engaged for, and yet never be exhibited. And every circumstance of the prophecy contained in this context serves to prove, that the persons here foretold would only undertake to shew great signs, without performing what they undertook. But I shall argue chiefly from the history of those persons in whose appearance and pretensions this prophecy received its completion, and which must be allowed to be the best key to the interpretation of this prophetic warning.

Our Saviour here refers to those impostors who sprung up in Judea in the interval between the delivery of this prophecy and the destruction of Jerusalem. As early as the 45th or 46th year of the Christian æra, one Theudas, who called himself a prophet, persuaded great numbers to follow him to Jordan, by telling them that he would by his own command di-

the authority of miracles, which unbelievers have hitherto raised from this passage. The doctor in his reply expresses himself in the following terms: *Your answer is very agreeable, and will be of use to me.* Accordingly he inserted it in his *Testimonies*, vol. i. p. 67.

* Deut. xiii. 1. in the Septuagint.

vide

that is, appeal to, promise or undertake to produce, such signs; using the very language of the Jewish legislator explained above, who represents a prophet as *giving** (that is, proposing and appealing to) a sign or wonder, whether it did or did not come to pass. The phrase itself does not determine, whether the sign given, be it the promise of a miracle or the prediction of an event, would be confirmed or confuted when it was expected to be accomplished. It might be engaged for, and yet never be exhibited. And every circumstance of the prophecy contained in this context serves to prove, that the persons here foretold would only undertake to shew great signs, without performing what they undertook. But I shall argue chiefly from the history of those persons in whose appearance and pretensions this prophecy received its completion, and which must be allowed to be the best key to the interpretation of this prophetic warning.

Our Saviour here refers to those impostors who sprung up in Judea in the interval between the delivery of this prophecy and the destruction of Jerusalem. As early as th[illegible] of the Chris- [illegible] one The[illegible] 'f a prophet, [illegible] Jordan, by [illegible] d di- [illegible] ised [illegible] the [illegible] vide

vide the river: but this confident boast ended in his own destruction, as well as that of many of his followers*. About nine or ten years afterwards, Judea swarmed with these deceivers, who led the people into the wilderness, and *undertook to exhibit divine wonders*†. One who came out of Egypt promised to cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall down; but the deluded multitudes who followed him were dispersed or destroyed by the Romans, *suffering* (to use the language of Josephus) *the just punishment of their folly*†. The nearer the Jews were to destruction, so much the more did these impostors multiply, and so much the more easy credit did they find with those who were willing to have their miseries soothed by hope. Even during the conflagration of the temple a false prophet encouraged the people with miraculous signs of deliverance‡: nor did the total destruction of the city cure this madness; as appears by the conduct of an impostor at Cyrene§, who *promised to shew them signs and apparitions.*

There is the most perfect correspondence, between the impostors described by Josephus and those foretold by Christ, in the following particulars: 1. According to Josephus, their appearance both preceded and accompanied the destruction of Jerusalem; and by Christ also they were distinctly foretold both as

* Joseph. Antiq. l. xx. c. v. § 1.

† Id. ib. c. viii. § 6. et de B. J. l. ii. c. xiii. § 4, 5.

‡ Id. de B. J. l. vi. c. v. § 2.

§ Id. ib. l. vii. c. xi. § 1. σημεια και φασματα δειξειν ὑπισχνουμενος.

the

the distant* signs and forerunners, and as the nearer† and more immediate attendants, of that great and awful catastrophe. 2. Our Saviour describes them as severally assuming the double character of a prophet and of the Messiah: and according to the Jewish historian, they both pretended to inspiration and prophecy‡, and undertook the peculiar office of the Messiah §, the deliverance of God's people from their enemies. 3. *They shall give* (or undertake to exhibit) *great signs and wonders*, says the prophecy: and the history relates the fact in perfectly corresponding language, "They *promised* to shew or exhibit evident wonders and signs ||." 4. Does our Saviour say, that by their confident promises of miracles they would *deceive many* ⸸ of the unbelieving Jews, and *the very elect*, or *Christians themselves***, *were that possible*, that is, could this well be supposed of persons who certainly knew that the Messiah was already come? Josephus informs us that these impostors drew away

*Matt. xxiv. 5. Mark xiii. 6. Luke xxi. 8.

†Matt. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22.

‡ As they styled themselves prophets, so they professed to act προσχηματι θειασμου, *under pretence of a divine afflatus*, Joseph. de B. J. l. ii. c. xiii. § 4.

§ Luke xxiv. 21. and Grot. in loc.

|| Δειξειν γαρ εφασαν εναργη τερατα και σημεια. Joseph. Ant. l. xx. c. viii. § 6. This language of Josephus serves both to explain and verify our Saviour's prediction, so as to remove all reasonable doubt concerning either its meaning or truth.

⸸ Matth. xxiv. 5.

** Ver. 24, compared with Rom. xvi. 13. Col. iii. 12. 1 Thess. i. 4.

vast

the business of the Pagan prophet (or interpreter of the will of the gods) and diviner by dreams to expound *. And that Moses does not here refer to any miraculous works performed *upon the spot*, but to a prodigy or sign of some future event, is farther evident from his speaking of the sign given, as a thing that *might come to pass*, or afterwards happen. To *give* a sign or a wonder, therefore, must mean, the proposing and appealing to any particular prodigy or portent, as a token or proof of a divine interposition, as a declaration of the decrees of the gods, and an indication of futurity. It is indeed supposed that the prodigy might possibly be followed by the very event it was said to presage; nevertheless Moses did not and could not admit that this completion of the prediction was a proof of any supernatural inspira-

same sense as Ælian. See also the citation from Herodotus, sect. iii. p. 164, note †, where τερας signifies a prodigy. The following passage from Livy (l. xxii. c. 44.) may serve further to explain the nature and use of prodigies: Consules duabus urbanis legionibus scripsit, supplementoque in alias lecto, priusquam ab urbe moverent, prodigia procurarunt, quæ nuntiata erant. Muros ac portas tactas, et Ariciæ etiam Jovis ædes de cælo tacta fuerat. Et alia ludibria oculorum, auriumque, credita pro veris. The prophetic sign and portent was sometimes preternatural, Homer. Il. ii. l. 308—324, but often nothing more than some very rare and uncommon accidents and occurrences, Terent. Phormio, act. iv. sc. 4. l. 24, 25, 26. Hence the Roman orator says, (de Div. l. ii.) Si quod raro fit, id portentum putandum est, sapientem esse portentum est, sapiens enim multum peperisse arbitror, quam sapientem fuisse.

* In Homer (Il. i. ver. 62.) *a prophet*, and *an expounder of dreams*, are reckoned amongst the persons capable of explaining the meaning of Apollo in sending the plague amongst the Greeks. Compare *Jerem.* xxvii. 9.

tion.

tion. For the Heathen gods, according to his representation of them, were as unable to foretell as they were to accomplish any thing. Predictions no less than miracles are proposed in Scripture as signs of a prophet's mission. When a prophet spoke in the name of the *true God*, and the event foretold did not come to pass, the Israelites were to conclude that the prophet spoke entirely from himself*; it being impossible that Jehovah should either be deceived himself or deceive his creatures. On the other hand, if his prediction (of such future events as human reason could not foresee) received its accomplishment, they were to regard him as a prophet†. But a person who spoke in the name of a *false* or *idol god* was to be rejected, notwithstanding the accomplishment of his (conjectural) prediction; because the deity by whom he professed to be inspired was a mere nullity, and therefore could not inspire him with any supernatural knowledge. The very supposition, that the Pagan prognosticator might in a particular instance divine aright, implies that this was not likely to be a common case, but that his predictive sign would more generally fail of its accomplishment; and consequently was nothing more than human conjecture‡.

To discern the full meaning and propriety of this

* Deut. xviii. 18—22.

† Jerem. xxviii. 9. Is. xli. 23. ch. vii. 14.

‡ Against the divinity of signs and ostents we find the Heathens objecting their obscurity, Quæ si signa deorum putanda sunt, cur tam obscura fuerunt? Cicero de Divinat. l. ii. c. 25. See above, p. 180.

timates, that his opposers were not immediately commissioned to publish the Gospel by God, because he did not support their claim by miracles. The power of miracles he elsewhere calls the *sign of an apostle**; and on a still different occasion he thus describes and distinguishes himself, *He that worketh miracles amongst you*†: could miracles then be common both to him and his opponents? He warns the Corinthians against giving him occasion to exercise his miraculous power in their punishment: *What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod?* This is not the language of a person expecting miracles to be opposed by miracles. Nay, he represents the leaders of the opposite party as supporting themselves wholly by artifice and fraud: ‡ *Such are false apostles, deceitful workers,* (or labourers in the gospel §,) *transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.* It may be doubted whether St. Paul is here speaking of any transformation of Satan, in the literal sense of the word: for the false apostles did not in this sense change themselves into the apostles of Christ, or assume their *external shape and form.* But the false apostles here referred to *pretended* to preach *gratis;* which is what St. Paul really did at Corinth: and this groundless pretence was the sole foundation of their claim to the apostolical character. To prevent the Corinthians from being deceived by such or any other specious appearances and disguises, he reminds

* 2 Cor. xii. 12.
† Gal. iii. 2, 5.
‡ 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14.
§ Locke upon the place.

them,

them, that the very worst characters might easily assume the outward semblance of virtue; that there was not any *temptation**, even of the most *infernal kind*, which did not strive to conceal its deformity, and assume an alluring and *celestial* form. It is possible, however, that St. Paul may here refer to an opinion, common amongst the Heathens, that evil spirits could render themselves visible, at pleasure, and assume the appearance of gods and dæmons†. Nor is it necessary to suppose that the apostle is here delivering his own opinion; he may be barely illustrating his argument by a commonly received sentiment concerning evil spirits‡.

Both Paul and Peter represent the false teachers as seducing their followers, not by miracles, but by

* Dr. Doddridge upon the place.

† Porphyry (de Abstinent. l. ii. § 39, 40.), speaking of spiritual beings, and evil dæmons in particular, says, *All these are naturally invisible to men; but they make themselves visible at pleasure, change their forms, and personate the gods.* Apuleius (in Apol. Socrat.) says, At enim Pythagoricos mirari oppido solitos, si quis se negaret unquam vidisse dæmonem. See Jamblichus, sect. ii. c. 3. and Porphyry cited below, ch. iv. sect. ii. article 2.

‡ Thus our Saviour draws a comparison between the Jews, and *the spirits who walk through dry places;* and the Psalmist speaks of the *deaf adder that stops her ear to the voice of the charmers,* (persons who used forbidden arts, Deut. xviii. 11.) with regard to which the authors of the Universal History observe, There is no more occasion to understand it literally, than if he had compared an evil tongue to the voice of a syren, the claws of a harpy, the eyes of a basilisk, or any other fabulous creature, vol. iii. p. 491, 8vo ed. The words of the Psalmist, however, are differently interpreted by others. See the learned Mr. Merrick's annotations on Psalm lviii. 4, 5.

fair speeches, and a base condescension to men's criminal passions *. Jude describes them as *not having the Spirit* †; and John brands all their pretensions as imposture: *Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not; and hast found them liars* ‡. He lays it down as an universal maxim, *Every spirit* (or pretender to a spiritual and divine afflatus) *that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God* §. And Paul in like manner declares, *that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed* ‖. Nevertheless, because such opposers of Christianity as these apostles speak of could not be inspired by *God*, it has hence been inferred that they were enabled to work miracles by the *devil*. But the former does by no means infer the latter. To understand these passages, we must recollect that John most certainly, and Paul ⸸ possibly, refers to the Jewish antichrists **, some of whom assumed to

* Rom. xvi. 18. 1 Cor. iv. 9. Col. ii. 4, 8. 2 Pet. ii. 18.

† Ver. 19. ‡ Rev. ii. 2. § 1 John iv. 3. ‖ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

⸸ It is immaterial to our present purpose, whether St. Paul refers to the Jewish antichrists, or to the unbelieving Jews in general, who had long taught that the Spirit of God could rest on none but on those of their own nation, and still pretended to some of his gifts. The apostle therefore with great propriety here reminds Christians of two self-evident truths: *that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus* (one so highly approved of God!) *accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord*, (or assert and maintain Christ's divine authority,) *but by the Holy Ghost*. Does not this language imply that all genuine miracles proceed from the Spirit of God?

** See what was observed above in the explication of Matt. xxiv. 24. and compare Whitby on 1 John iv. 1, 2.

themselves the character of the Messiah, and all of whom opposed the claims of Jesus; and did it under the pretence of a *divine* afflatus and inspiration. Now, since those who denied Jesus to be the Messiah pretended to be prophets of the true God (herein differing from the idolatrous prophet mentioned by Moses *), the apostles direct their fellow christians to conclude that such pretences must be false—for this self-evident reason, that God cannot contradict himself. Since Christians allowed that God had borne testimony to Jesus, it was impossible he should ever bear testimony against him. As to any intercourse with *evil* spirits, or assistance from them, these prophets did not pretend to it; nor do the apostles charge them with it, but resolve their pretensions into human delusion and forgery, as we have already seen.

IV.

St. Paul's prophecy † concerning the man of sin, *whose coming is after the working of Satan* ‡, *with all power, and signs, and lying wonders* §, though frequently urged to shew that the papal hierarchy was to be supported by real miracles, proves the very contrary. Whoever considers the nature of the papal empire (that most flagitious and daring usurpation

* Deut. xiii. 1. † 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.

‡ That this phrase, *the working of Satan* or an adversary, does not imply a *miraculous* agency, appears from the use of it Ephes. ii. 2.

§ Whoever compares this passage with Heb. ii. 4. will find the same terms applied both to the miracles of Popery and Christianity; and consequently will be forced to maintain that they are both *equal*, unless the latter alone were genuine, and the former counterfeit.

on the government of God, and all the valuable rights of mankind!) will readily admit, that if ever the devil had a hearty zeal for any cause, it must be for this; and that he would have exerted his utmost power for its support. Nevertheless the apostle, instead of allowing that popery would have the advantage of *true* miracles, affirms that the coming of the man of sin was to be *with all power, and signs, and wonders of a lie**; that is, *with lying* or *fictitious power, and signs, and wonders.* The apostle does not say that the wonders are wrought with an intention to deceive; but that the wonders themselves are a lie, the sole effect of falsehood and imposture. The church of Rome lays claim to a miraculous power, glories in it as a mark of the true church †; and from hence infers the validity of her pretensions. Many learned protestants have allowed in part the truth of this claim, and admitted that some real miracles have been performed in the Roman church. But the inspired apostle brands them all as deceitful tricks and

* This is the true rendering of the original words, εν πασῃ δυναμει και σημειοις και τερασι ψευδους. The word *lie* refers equally to all the preceding terms, and ought not to have been limited to the last. That *the power, and signs, and wonders of a lie* denote *lying* or *fictitious power, signs and wonders*, by a usual hebraism, appears from Deut. xxxii. 20. 2 Sam. xii. 15. Ps. v. 6. Luke xvi. 6. Ephes. ii. 2. ch. iv. 24. Col. i. 3; and from the context also, where the like form of speech is used. *The man of sin* denotes a notoriously sinful man: and the deceivableness of unrighteousness signifies unrighteous deceptions. Nay, in the very place in question, the present translation renders *wonders of a lie, lying wonders.*

† Undecima nota est gloria miraculorum. Bellarmin. de Notis Ecclesiæ, l. iv. c. 14.

fabulous legends. Such, many of the best attested are allowed to be by the members of the Roman communion *; and such with equal reason we may safely pronounce them all. It is not therefore the power of miracles, (as some maintain †) but *the making false pretences to it*, that St. Paul here (and else-

* They confess many even of those miracles, which were attested by witnesses upon oath, to be mere impostures. Maraccius, speaking of certain bones which were mistaken for those of some eminent saints, says, Vix credi potest, quot statim miracula de iis in vulgus emanaverint, quæ etiam adjuratis testibus confirmabantur. Et tamen nullum hic erat, nec esse poterat, verum miraculum. Prodr. pars 2. Melchior Canus complains, that the lives of the philosophers, and the histories of the Cæsars, are written by Laërtius and Suetonius with greater regard to truth than the lives of the saints by the Catholics. And speaking of *the golden legend*, he says, it contains for the most part rather monsters of miracles than true miracles. Other learned papists have made the like complaints, as may be seen in Geddes's Tracts, vol. iii. tract ii. p. 49. Even the miracles ascribed to the missionaries of the Roman church in India, where they are most wanted, are denied by their gravest writers. Hospinian. de Origin. Jesuitar. p. 230. Middleton's prefat. Dis. to his Letter from Rome, p. 97. and Acosta de procuranda Indorum Salute, cited by the Criterion, p. 77. I add, that whenever any one of the orders of the Roman church endeavours to support its peculiar tenets by supernatural works, the other orders seldom fail to detect the cheat, or to treat it with all imaginable contempt. Will any one undertake to produce one popish miracle, which is either more credible in its nature, or more strongly attested, than those which learned papists themselves have condemned as impudent falsehoods?

† *Admitting* (says a very learned writer) *that any of the Romish miracles were undeniable matters of fact; ---yet I know not what the bishop of Rome would gain by it, but a better title to be thought antichrist.* Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, vol. ii. 279, and vol. iii. p. 223.

where)

where *) assigns as one of the characteristics of the man of sin; and by which he is remarkably distinguished from Mohammed and other impostors, to whom this prophecy has been improperly applied.

V.

The papacy seems to be farther characterized in the Revelation of St. John †: *He doeth great wonders* (or *signs* ‡) *so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men; and he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by means of those miracles* (or *signs*) *which he has power to do in the sight of the beast.*

Whatever be the true sense of this obscure passage, it ought not to have any meaning assigned it, repugnant to the numerous more plain declarations of the divine word. If the prediction of St. Paul, which we last examined, brands all the miracles of popery as *forgeries*, this of St. John cannot allow them to be *realities*. Besides, there is this material difference in the two cases: the prophecy of St. Paul is delivered in much plainer terms, not under the cover of symbolical representations; but the revelations made to St. John were in the way of *vision*, in which there was frequent use of *emblems* and *symbols*, with which we find the whole Apocalypse abounds. And therefore it is more natural to give a figurative than a lite-

* See 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2. explained above, ch. iii. sect. i. p. 106.

† Ch. xiii. 13, 14.

‡ Σημεια. The same word is used in the original in both verses, though rendered by our translators *wonders* in the 13th, and *miracles in the 14th verse.*

tal

ral construction to this language of St. John. *The making fire to come down from heaven* may possibly refer to the *anathemas* and *excommunications* of the Roman church, styled the *thunders* of the Vatican, which are shocking imprecations for fire from heaven, and were thought to expose men to its hottest vengeance, (as a symbol of which they used, in pronouncing their excommunications, to swing down a lighted torch from above *;) and which have actually set whole kingdoms in a flame, being inforced by princes and persons in authority, who in the prophetic language are represented by *the heavens*. On either or both these accounts, but more especially the former, the fire may be said to come down from thence. The *great signs* he is here said to perform, include these and other amazing artifices used by the pope, to persuade an ignorant and credulous laity that the vengeance of heaven will be armed against all his opposers. The success of these frauds, and the credit they would gain with the members of the Roman communion, may be intimated in their being spoken of as done *in the sight of men*, and in *the sight of the beast*. However this may be, I can see no ground to conclude, that amongst the signs here referred to we are to include true miracles †; both because

* Sir Isaac Newton, in his Observations on the Apocalypse, p. 319.

† The word σημεια denotes signs and tokens, even though they are not miraculous; as we shewed above on Deut. xiii. 1; and it is in the Apocalypse applied to surprising events, ch. xii. 1, 3. ch. xv. 1. There may be a reference in this chapter to those strange appearances,

because the word is applied to other events; and the sign here particularly specified, *the making fire to come down from heaven*, if understood figuratively, agreeably to the style of St. John's prophecy, was not miraculous. Moreover, true miracles are never represented as means of *delusion*, but of conviction.

We have now distinctly examined the several passages of Scripture which are generally thought to allow the claims of false prophets to inspiration and miracles; and I hope it appears, either that those passages do not refer to any such claims, or expressly deny their validity. Whether these prophets spoke in the name of the true God, or in the name of false gods, the Scriptures represent them as totally destitute of supernatural knowledge and power, and expressly resolve all their pretences to them into human artifice and falsehood *. This has been already shewn, both

pearances (such as the bowing of crucifixes, the shaking and stirring their hands and feet, motions performed by secret springs; and a thousand other things of the like kind;) which, though mere human artifices, are represented as the effects of the divine power. The fraud practised by the Roman clergy with regard to these things was exposed in some remarkable instances at the Reformation. See Burnet's History of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 232.

* Some of our latest and most approved writers upon miracles affirm that God will not suffer false prophets to work miracles *so as to lay men under a necessity of being deceived*, or *without giving honest men plain evidence of the imposture*. See Mr. Hallet on Miracles, and Dr. Benson's Life of Christ, p. 202, 203, 219, 220, 222, 234, 235, 236. The Scriptures seem to me to deny the power of false prophets to perform miracles under any circumstances whatever. And indeed, if *the whole nature of miracles lay in being such things as are above the power of men*,

both with respect to their pretended miracles and prophecies. I will here add a few passages which more immediately refer to the latter. Moses ascribes them to *the arrogance* or *presumption* * of the prophet. Jeremiah calls them *the vision of his own heart* †, not the supernatural suggestions of the devil. And Ezekiel describes the false prophets as prophesying *out of their own hearts*, and *following their own spirit*, and *as having seen nothing* ‡.

Before we proceed any farther, let us recollect how far we are advanced in examining into the sense of Scripture concerning the author of miracles, whether of power or knowledge. We have attempted to shew that the Scripture denies the ability of performing any miracles, to angels, whether good or evil; to the spirits of departed men; to the Heathen deities; to magicians, who pretended to an intercourse

men, (as the doctor affirms, p. 236, compare p. 204;) if they may be performed by false prophets, when they do not necessarily subject honest men to delusion; and, if performed by such prophets, are to have no regard paid to them, (p. 202;) how are they, in their own nature, signs of *a divine* interposition and a divine mission? Besides, there could be very little danger of any man's being deceived by the miracles of a false prophet, if he was clearly and certainly persuaded that these works are no distinguishing test of a divine interposition; (as was shewn above, p. 85.) There would, in this case, be more probability of men's rejecting the miracles of a true prophet, from an apprehension that infinite wisdom would not employ ambiguous proofs of a divine mission.

* Deut. xviii. 22. *The prophet has spoken it presumptuously*, בזדון per superbiam vel tumorem animi sui.

† Ch. xxiii. 16. In ch. xiv. 14, he says, *They prophesy unto you a false vision,—and the deceit of their heart.*

‡ Ezek. xiii. 2, 3. See also Zechar. xiii. 4.

with

with them; and lastly, to all false prophets, upon whatever principles they grounded their pretensions. Now these are the only agents who have ever been conceived as capable of working miracles, either in opposition to God or without an immediate commission from him. And consequently the Scripture, by denying the miraculous power of all these, does in effect deny that any single miracle has ever been performed without the immediate interposition of God. Farther evidence of this important point will occur in the following sections.

SECTION V.

The Scriptures represent the one true God as the sole creator and sovereign of the world, which he governs by fixed and invariable laws. To him they appropriate all miracles, and urge them as demonstrations of his divinity and sole dominion over nature, in opposition to the claims of all other superior beings. The antient controversy between the prophets of God and idolaters stated.

In direct opposition to the numerous fictitious deities of the Pagans, whether they were supposed to possess an original, or only a delegated power and authority; the prophets of the true God affirm that he alone is God: *He is Jehovah, and there is no God besides him: He is Jehovah, and there is none else**. The Heathens maintained the existence of local† deities,

* Deut. iv. 35. Is. xlv. 5, 6, 18, 21, 22 Compare ch. xliii. 10—13. ch. xliv. 8. 2 Sam. vii. 22.

† 1 Kings xx. 23.

whose

whose power and presence were circumscribed within narrow bounds. Aristotle very justly observes, "that it was by no means agreeable to the system of religion established by law, to suppose God to be one most powerful and excellent being; the gods in that system being mutually better one than another, as to many things *." Accordingly we find, that as each nation † had its chief deity, so several of the gods held by the same people were each of them supreme in their respective provinces, and independent of the rest. One was supreme ruler over *the heavens*, another over *the air* and *winds*, and others still different from these over *the sea* and *earth* and *hell*. But the language of revelation is, *Jehovah he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath, there is none else* ‡: he exists and operates in all places, without limits, and without control §. To understand this language, it is necessary to recollect, that the word *God* in Scripture denotes a governor or king; nor is more included in the general idea than authority and dominion. Moses is called *a god to Pharaoh* ‖; because he was appointed to control and govern him. Judges and kings are frequently called *gods* with re-

* When arguing against Zeno, Aristotle says, ειπερ απαντα επιτρεπτον τον Θεον λαμβανειν, τουτο δυνατωτατον και βελτιστον λεγειν, ου δοκει δε τουτο κατα τον νομον, αλλα πολλα κρειττους ειναι αλληλων ως Θεοι. De Xenophano, Zenone, et Gorgia, c. 4. inter Oper. vol. ii. p. 841, 842, ed. Paris.

† Judges xi. 24. ‡ Deut. iv. 39.

§ 1 Kings viii. 27. Ps. cxxxix. 1—12. Is. xliii. 13.

‖ Exod. vii. 1.

spect

spect to their subjects, over whom they rule *. And therefore when the sacred writers assert that there is no other God but Jehovah, they mean that there is no superior being besides him, who has any power or dominion over mankind. Had there been other superior beings who were vested with power over the human race, the Scripture, we have seen †, would have allowed that they were our gods or rulers.

The Heathens either believed the eternity ‡ of the world, or ascribed its origin, and the generation of animals §, to elementary and sidereal deities. According to the established system of theology, the world was *begotten*, not created; at once *the offspring* and *the parent* of gods, and *itself* a god ‖. On the other hand, the sacred penmen ascribe its creation to the sole operation (or rather to the almighty fiat ⸸) of the one eternal Jehovah: *He made the sea, his hand formed the dry land* **. *He formed the light, and created darkness* ††. *He created the heavens, and the earth, and all the host of them* ‡‡; that is, the whole world, all the parts which compose, and all the crea-

* Exod. xxi. 6. ch. xxii. 9, 28. Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6. Compare John x. 34, 35.

† Ch. iii. sect. ii. p. 151, 152.

‡ Diodorus Siculus, p. 6, ed. Rhodomani.

§ See above, p. 163.

‖ See above, 106—9. What we call the creation or formation of the world, was in the Pagan system its *generation*, or *a cosmogony*. And their cosmogony or generation of the world was *a theogony*, or *generation of gods*.

⸸ Ps xxxiii. 6, 9. Ps. cxlviii. 5. Gen. i. 3. ** Ps. xcv. 5.

†† Is. xlv. 7. ‡‡ Gen. i. 1. ch. ii. 1. Ps. xxxiii. 6.

tures

tures that inhabit it, whatever divine attributes and operations might be foolishly ascribed to any of them by the Heathens. God asserts his sole prerogative in such language as this: *I am Jehovah, who maketh all things, who stretcheth forth the heavens alone, who spreadeth abroad the earth by myself**. This truth is often inculcated, with the express design of guarding the Israelites from worshipping the objects of nature†.

To these false gods, and to dæmons, the Heathens ascribed the government of the world, the direction of all human affairs, the calamities and prosperity of persons and nations. But the Scriptures celebrate Jehovah as the universal sovereign, who exercises an absolute dominion over all without any rival, without any co-adjutor or partner of his throne; *I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no Saviour.——There is none can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it*‡? *I make peace, and create evil*§. It was, indeed, the main design of the Jewish dispensation, to convince the Israelites and the whole world, that as Jehovah created the world at first, so he reserved the government of it in his own hands; and that there was no superior invisible being whatever, besides Jehovah, on whose favour the good or evil state of their lives did in any degree depend. This is the doctrine every where inculcated, in direct opposition to those who taught that there were invisible beings, who were the authors both of blessings and calamities

* Is. xliv. 24. † Deut. iv. 19. Jerem. xiv. 22.
‡ Is. xliii. 11, 13. § Ch. xlv. 7.

to

to mankind. The order of the natural world is represented as fixed *by his decree, which shall not pass away;* and governed by his laws, *which shall not be broken,* by laws *which he has established for ever and ever* *; and consequently which cannot be controlled by any authority except that by which they were at first ordained. If you say that the allowing a liberty to superior created intelligences to interpose in human affairs, is one of those very laws which God has ordained, I answer, that if they can do this of themselves, and without an immediate commission from God, then what the Scriptures affirm is not true; there are other superior invisible beings besides God, who can dispense both good and evil to mankind; and the order of events in the natural world is *not fixed* at all, but is dependent upon the pleasure of those superior beings †.

With regard to miracles, or deviations from the ordinary course of nature, the Scriptures refer them to God as their author. Nor do they ascribe them to him *eminently,* as some ‡ pretend, but absolutely *appropriate* them to him *alone.* Witness the song of Moses, *Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, amongst the gods? who is like unto thee,—doing wonders* §? What

* Ps. cxlviii. 6. Ps lxxxix. 37. Ps. cxix. 90, 91. Jerem. xxxi. 35, 36. ch. xxxiii. 25.

† See above, ch. ii. sect. iii.

‡ Dr. Sykes on Miracles, and others.

§ Exod. xv. 11. That by *wonders,* in this and the following passages, we are to understand miracles, appears from the connection in which the word is used. The miracles more especially referred to

What words can more strongly deny to all other beings the power of working miracles, and challenge it as the sole prerogative of the true God, than the following passages? *Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things*! Thou art great, and doest wondrous things, thou art God alone*†. Such language often occurs: *Thou art the God that doest wonders*‡. *To him who alone doeth great wonders*§. Whenever the sacred writers occasionally mention any particular miracles, whether of power or knowledge, they affirm concerning every one of them separately what they do concerning all of them in general. Thus, they affirm it to be the sole and exclusive prerogative of God, to raise the dead‖, to open the eyes of the blind ⸸, to tread upon the waves of the sea**, to still the noise of its waves ††, to reveal secret and distant transactions ‡‡, to foretell future events §§, and to search the heart of man. These declarations of Scripture, though they are particularly levelled against the false pretences to prophecies and miracles amongst the Pagans, are no more to be reconciled with the notion of the devil's possessing a supernatural power, than with the opinion of any Heathen god's possessing that power. If any

to are those wrought in favour of the Israelites; concerning which Moses declares, that all the annals of time could afford no instance of a like nature. Deut. iv. 32—36.

* Ps. lxxii. 18. † Ps. lxxxvi. 10. ‡ Ps lxxvii. 14.
§ Ps cxxxvi. 4. ‖ Deut. xxxii. 39. 1 Sam. ii. 6. 2 Cor. i. 9.
⸸ Ps. cxlvi. 8. ** Job ix. 8. †† Ps. lxv. 9. Ps. cvii. 29.
‡‡ Dan. ii. 28, 29, 47.
§§ Is. xlii. 9. ch. xlv. 21. ch. xlvi. 9, 10.

being

being whatever can perform miracles, besides God it is not true that God alone can perform them.

As the Scriptures represent miracles as works pecu liar to God; so they urge them as proofs of his sol divinity, or of his claim to the distinguishing cha racter of Jehovah. To give us a clearer idea of thi very important point, we must look back to the firs account of miracles. When Moses, on his bein appointed God's ambassador to the people of Israel and the court of Egypt, desired to be instructed b what title he should describe him; God was please to assume a name, which of all others was the mos expressive of his nature, I AM, or JEHOVAH* Both these names are in sense the same, and expres *his eternal, underived and immutable existence an excellence* †. They likewise assert this as his sole pre rogative; and therefore necessarily imply (what som think they directly express) *his giving being to al other things* ‡, or his being the sovereign creator an absolut

* Exod. iii. 13, 14, 15. In the 13th verse what is commonl translated, I AM THAT I AM, is rendered by Mr. Purver, I AM HE WHO AM. Accordingly God ordered Moses to tell the Israe lites, I AM has sent me unto you. Though the word *ehjeh* be in th future, yet according to the genius of the Hebrew tongue it is ap plicable to the present tense.

† Est autem hoc nomen, Ehjeh ascher Ehjeh, derivatum a verb hajah. quod significat essentiam vel existentiam. Maimon. Mor Nevoc. p. i. c. 63.

‡ Ainsworth and others are of opinion, that Jehovah is a parti ciple of הָיָה hajah in *hiel*; and t at it does not only signify *to be*, bu *to cause to be*. Universal Hist. vol. i p. 360, 361. In the foregoin part of that note, p. 358, the learned authors condemn our versior fo

absolute lord of the universe. This was designed to prevent both the Israelites and Egyptians from de-

for rendering Jehovah by LORD, and the LXX for rendering it κυριος; though bishop Beveridge (vol. i. p. 111.) alleges that κυριος comes from κυρεω *to be*, as Jehovah from hajah. The last-mentioned writer observes, p. 112, that the word Jehovah is never used with any other genitive case after it, but *sabaoth*, though this occurs so frequently. The title of Jehovah or LORD of hosts (or sabaoth) does not denote *the God of battle*; as those assert it does, who would degrade the God of Israel to a level with the Heathen god of war, whose peculiar province it was to preside over battles. This very magnificent title is given to God, on account of his being the creator and sovereign of all other beings; the monarch, not of some particular people and province, but of the whole universe. He created *the heavens, and the earth, and all the host of them*, Gen. ii. 1. *He is the former of all things,—the LORD of hosts is his name*, Jerem. li. 19. ch. x. 16. *Thus saith Jehovah, which giveth the sun for a light by day,—the LORD of hosts is his name*, Jerem. xxxi. 35. See ch. xxxii. 18, 19. Is. xlii. 5. ch. xliv. 24. ch. xlv. 5. Dan. iv. 35. The English reader should be reminded, that whenever LORD, in capital letters, occurs in our translation, Jehovah is used in the original, which I have generally retained in the passages cited in the sequel.

After I had drawn up the preceding part of this note, I found that the celebrated Le Clerc was of the same sentiment with Ainsworth, with respect to the meaning and derivation of Jehovah; though the former declares he had never met with it in any author. I will transcribe a part of his note on Exod. vi. 3. Dubium non est quin vox ab הָיָה fuit derivetur, quo factum ut suspicarer Deum vocabulum יְהוָה sibi sumsisse, non quod suâ naturâ sit, adeoque æternitate gaudeat, sed quod efficiat ut res sint, quasi esset futurum Hiphil יַהֲוֶה aut Pihel יְהַוֶּה faciet ut sit. We may, however, allow that the word Jehovah was only designed to express God's eternal and immutable existence, and to assert this as his sole prerogative; inasmuch as it necessarily follows from hence, that all other beings owe their existence to his sovereign pleasure. And the miracles designed to prove the former serve to ascertain the latter.

grading him to the level of the *tutelary* deities of the Pagans, (whose influence was thought to be confined to a particular country and people,) and, by asserting his proper distinguishing character, to deny the claims of all their gods to any share in the creation and government of the world. In direct opposition to these false gods, mere fictions of the human imagination, the God of Israel styles himself Jehovah *, *him who is* †, *and from whom all other beings are derived.* This construction of the word is confirmed by the sequel: God said to Moses, *I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name* (or under the character) *of God* ALMIGHTY; *but by my name* (or character of) JEHOVAH *was I not known unto them* ‡. God had called himself by the name Jehovah to the Patriarchs §; and they had invoked him by it: in what sense then was it unknown to them? Critics have supposed that it refers to God's giving being or life to his *promises*, by their actual accomplishment ‖. But this seems a very groundless limitation of the word. Understand

* *I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.* Isaiah xlii. 8.

† As on other occasions he is styled the *living* God, in opposition to *dead* men, whom the Heathens worshipped as gods.

‡ Exod. vi. 3.

§ Gen. xv. 7, 8. ch. xxvi. 24. ch. xxii. 14. ch. xxviii. 13.

‖ Both Ainsworth and Le Clerc suppose that the word Jehovah expresses God's causing his promises to receive their accomplishment: but many of the passages cited by the latter, and particularly Is. xlii. 5. ch. xlv. 5—7. Jerem. xxxi. 35, shew that it must be taken in a still more extensive sense, and that it expresses his character as universal creator.

it

it in its just latitude, and God will appear to speak to the following effect: "I took your fathers under my powerful protection, and granted them marks of my peculiar favour; hereby acting rather under the character of *their God*, than as *the one eternal Deity, and only sovereign of the universe*. And though your pious ancestors always entertained just ideas of me as Jehovah, yet I did not make this my true character *known* * and *evident* in the conspicuous manner I am now going to do. To your fathers I revealed myself chiefly by *private dreams and visions*: but now I shall fully vindicate and proclaim my eternal Divinity, and my boundless dominion, by the most *public and stupendous miracles*." It was necessary to explain what is included in the term Jehovah, inasmuch as the miracles of Moses were designed to prove that this term was appropriate to the God of Israel.

To the Israelites God commanded Moses to say, I AM *hath sent me unto you; Jehovah, the God of your fathers, appeared unto me* †. Moses was farther instructed to tell the Israelites, *Ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God, which bringeth you out from the burthens of the Egyptians* ‡. The miraculous means of their deliverance were designed, as Moses says in express terms, for the conviction of the Israelites, or *that they might know that Jehovah he is God*, and *that*

* *To know* often signifies *to make known*; *I determined not to know any thing amongst you, save Jesus Christ*; that is, this was what I determined to *make known amongst you*. 1 Cor. ii. 2. See also ch. viii. 3, and Locke upon it.

† Exod. iii. 14, 15. ‡ Exod. vi. 7.

there

*there is none else besides him**. When Moses went to Pharaoh, and told him that Jehovah, the God of Israel, demanded the release of his people; and the king of Egypt asked, *Who is Jehovah?* and said, *I know not Jehovah:* God declares to Moses, *The Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from amongst them*†. Nay, each particular miracle is frequently alleged as a full demonstration of this grand point. God (by his prophet) said to Pharaoh, IN THIS (that is, by turning the waters of the river into blood) *thou shalt know that I am Jehovah*‡. The miraculous plagues of Egypt were not designed merely or principally to accomplish the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt; which might have been effected with fewer (or without any visible) deviations from the ordinary course of nature. The principal end which God had

* Deut. iv. 35. Compare Exod. x. 1, 2. ch. xi. 7. 2 Sam. vii. 22—24.

† Deut. v. 1, 2. ch. vii. 5. ch. ix. 14 ch. xiv. 4, 18, 25.

‡ Exod. vii. 17. In like manner Moses promised Pharaoh to remove the second plague, that of frogs, *that he might know there was none like unto Jehovah,* (ch. viii. 10.) or none besides him who could perform true miracles, (compare ch. xv. 11.)——The swarms of flies were sent upon Egypt, while Goshen was preserved from them, *to the end thou mayest know* (as God said to Pharaoh) *that I am Jehovah, in the midst of the earth,* (ch. viii. 22.) or, "the sovereign of the whole earth, not of one particular district only." The metaphor, as Paulus Fagius observes upon the place, is taken a regibus, qui sedes suas fere habent in mediis provinciis, ut ex æquo illis prospicere possint. ——To the same effect, it is said, the hail should be removed, that *Pharaoh* might know *that the earth is Jehovah's,* ch. ix. 29.

in

in view was infinitely more important, and the very same with that which he proposed by taking the Israelites to be his peculiar people, viz. the manifestation of himself to the world. For it was not from any partial regards to them that they were at first separated from the rest of mankind, but to accomplish the designs of God's general providence, and (amongst other important purposes) to recover and preserve the knowledge of the true God, and to propagate it amongst the Heathen nations (and thereby to prepare the world for the coming of Christ). The nations were already sunk into the grossest idolatry, such as gave a sanction to the foulest crimes. Egypt was the parent and nurse of this idolatry. From hence it was propagated through many other nations. By their residence in this country the Israelites themselves *were defiled with its idols**. Jehovah, therefore, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, was pleased to accomplish their redemption in a manner the most proper to convince them, and the Egyptians, and the other nations, of the evil and folly of idolatry, and to make himself known and adored as the only living God†. Pharaoh was preserved, after he deserved to have been cut off for his oppression and impiety, that, by the new wonders his obstinacy would occasion, *God's name might be declared through all the*

* Ezek. xx. 7. ch. xxiii. 2, 3. Josh. xxiv. 14.

† See Exod. ix. 14, 16. ch. xi. 7. ch. xiv. 4, 18. and compare Is. xix. 21. Ps. xxii. 27, 28.

earth.

*earth**. The effect they produced was answerable to this intention: for both the Israelites and many of the Egyptians *feared Jehovah, and believed Jehovah* †.

The miracles of succeeding prophets had the same most benevolent intention with those of Moses. The passage of the Israelites over Jordan, as well as that through the Red Sea, and their dispossession of the Canaan

* Exod. ix. 16. Though the passages cited above are fully sufficient to prove that the rescue of the Israelites from their cruel bondage was not (what too many have represented it) the whole design of God in the punishment of the Egyptians; and there can be no necessity therefore of producing any farther proofs of this point: yet I cannot forbear observing, that what has been advanced upon it seems to be confirmed by what God says to Moses, Exod. xii. 12. *I will smite all the first-born of the land of Egypt, both man and beast: and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am Jehovah.* Some indeed think, that by gods we are here to understand the *princes* and *rulers* of Egypt: but they were very few in number, in comparison with the multitudes who suffered the loss of their first-born. Others are of opinion that God threatens the *idols* of Egypt here, (as he does elsewhere, Is. xix. 1. Jerem. xliii. 13.) and that they suffered some such judgment as befel Dagon, 1 Sam. v. 3, 4. This however is not supported by the history. Why should we not understand God as speaking concerning *the deities* of Egypt? Let it be considered, that the miraculous judgments hitherto inflicted upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians were the wisest means that could be employed to convince them of the claims of Jehovah, and of the utter impotence of their own gods. For the Nile, the elements, and other objects of nature which they worshipped, were themselves employed by Jehovah as the instruments of their punishment. The death of the first-born, both of man and beast, was a farther condemnation of their false religion. For in antient times the priesthood was the privilege of primogeniture; in Egypt, their gods were taken from amongst the first-born of their flocks and herds; and these animal gods were worshipped with a reference to their elementary and sidereal deities.

The

Canaanites, had this ultimate view, *that all the people of the earth might know the hand of Jehovah, that it is mighty* ‡. When God interposed for the deliverance of his people, it was that both they and all the kingdoms of the earth *might know that he was Jehovah* §. Accordingly good men prayed to God to *maintain the cause of Israel at all times, that all the people of the earth might know that Jehovah is God, and that there is none else* ‖. And indeed the Israelites

The fatal catastrophe therefore which befel the first-born of Egypt, from which the Israelites were preserved, was the execution of judgment against all the gods, as well as against the people of that country. Thus was the great controversy concerning the claims of Jehovah, as sole monarch of the universe, and his right to demand the release of his people, finally determined. Those on whom such means of conviction could produce no lasting effect were certainly ripe for utter excision.

† Exod. ix. 20, 21. ch. xii. 38. ch. xiv. 31. The like effect was produced by other miracles, Josh. ii 10, 11. 1 Sam. xii. 18. 2 Chron. xx. 29.

‡ Josh. iv. 23, 24. Exod. xxxiv. 10.

§ 2 Kings xix. 15—19, 35. Compare 1 Kings xx. 13, 28. See also Ps. lxxxiii. 18.

‖ 1 Kings viii. 59, 60. Notwithstanding the numerous passages from the Old Testament cited above, together with a multitude of others, assert the God of Israel to be *Jehovah, the universal governor of the world, and the one only living and true God;* and notwithstanding the Heathen gods are a thousand times reproached in Scripture as mere nullities: yet the celebrated Voltaire has, in different works, endeavoured to persuade the world that the Jews and their prophets acknowledged the *local tutelary* deities of other countries, and at the same time insinuated that they worshipped their own God under no higher character than those. His great disingenuity in quoting the Scriptures is well exposed by the learned Mr. Findlay, in his *Vindication of the Sacred Books*, p. 98. Would writers of such eminence as

Mr.

ites would have been destroyed on account of their great propensity to idolatry, had not God intended by their miraculous protection or chastisement, as they were obedient or disobedient, to assert and vindicate his own Divinity in the eyes of all the nations. The conclusion to be drawn from every single act of miraculous power, by those who attended to its true nature and design, is the same as Naaman expressed, when his leprosy was miraculously cured: *Behold! now I know there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel**. The king of Israel in particular considered the cure of a leprosy as a proof of divine power: *Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me, to recover a man of his leprosy*†? And though the gods of Egypt and Canaan were worshipped by the most immoral rites, with which the worship of Jehovah could not be charged; yet the prophets of God never urge this circumstance either in confutation of their claims to divinity, or in proof of his; but refer the decision of both those claims to miracles alone. Whatever difference there may be between some miracles and others with respect to grandeur, the Old Testament constantly represents all miracles, whether of knowledge or of power, as proofs that the God of Israel was Jehovah‡. The New Testament

Mr. Voltaire rest the cause of infidelity on the grossest misrepresentations, were they conscious of being able to support it by fair reasoning?

* 2 Kings v. 15. † Ch. v. ver. 7.

‡ Is. xli. 21—26. ch. xlii. 8, 9. ch. xliii. 9—13. ch. xliv. 8. ch. xlv. 18, 21, 22. ch. xlvi. 9, 10. ch. xlviii. 3. Jerem. x. 5—16. Dan. ii. 11,

27.

tament also holds the same language, when it styles miracles the works of God*, and speaks of them as designed to recover idolaters to his faith† and worship.

How very different a view of miracles is this, from that given us by those learned moderns, who assert that they argue only the interposition of some power more than human; that the lowest orders of superior intelligences may perform great miracles; and higher orders of beings, greater miracles still; that no miracle recorded in Scripture can be pronounced beyond the power of all created beings in the universe to produce; and that in no case whatever can the immediate interposition of God be distinguished certainly by the works themselves‡! When the adversaries of revelation use such language with a view to destroy its evidence, they speak in character. But what raises our wonder is, its being held by some of its ablest votaries and advocates, notwithstanding that revelation strongly asserts the sole dominion of Jehovah over nature, and every deviation from the laws of nature (that is, every miracle) to be in itself a demonstration of his being its creator and lord. Which of these two opinions is most consonant to reason, is a point discussed in the second chapter. We only observe here, that they cannot both be true. Can those works be the sole prerogatives of Jehovah, and a proof of

27, 28, 29. 47. In these passages, revealing secrets, foretelling future events, delivering and saving, and the doing either good or evil in a supernatural manner, are not only asserted as the sole prerogatives of the true God, but urged as decisive proofs of deity.

* See below, sect. vi. † 1 Pet. i. 2.. 1 Thess. i. 9.

‡ Dr. Clarke at Boyle's Lectures, and others.

his sole and unrivalled sovereignty, which *others* besides him, and even when acting in opposition to him, have a power of performing as well as he? And can we successfully maintain the argument from miracles in favour of revelation, if we do not adhere to the use which revelation itself makes of miracles?

The most able of our modern writers seem not to have attended to the true state of the antient controversy between the prophets of God and idolaters. Even the very learned and sagacious bishop Sherlock, speaking of the miracles wrought for the conviction of Pharaoh, says, *Here the question plainly was between God under the character of the God of the Hebrews, and the god of the Egyptians, which of them was supreme**. He afterwards adds*, *When the question is,*

* Discourses, vol. i. p. 281, 285. At p. 279 he had affirmed, "God thought proper to exert himself in such acts of power as should demonstrate his *superiority* above all gods of the Heathen." And so little did his lordship attend to the history, that he affirms, after the generality of divines, that the character of distinction which God assumed when he commissioned Moses to work miracles, was that of the God of the Hebrews, p. 279, 280; notwithstanding its being so evident that the distinguishing-character which God then assumed was that of *Jehovah*; and that the grand design of Moses's miracles was to prove that the God of the Hebrews had a right to this title. The miracles of Moses were indeed in part designed to accomplish the deliverance of the Israelites; and in this view they demonstrated Jehovah to be *the God of the Hebrews*: a character under which God now appeared, though it was not now first assumed; for he had stood before in the same relation to their ancestors. But had he appeared under no other or higher character than this, he would have been confounded with the several local *deities of* the Heathens. Whenever he was thus degraded as only

the

is, Who is the mightiest, must it not be decided in his favour who visibly exerts the greatest acts of power?* All the Heathen nations had at that time their several local deities, whose respective claims did not interfere with one another; each deity having a particular province and people of his own. Hence it came to pass, that the god peculiar to each nation never had his divinity called in question within his own district by the other nations. So that, had Jehovah appeared under on higher character than that of the God of the Hebrews, the Heathens might and would have readily admitted it, without departing from their own principles. But the God of Israel assuming the title of Jehovah, and declaring this to be his distinguishing name and memorial, by which he would always be remembered and celebrated †, his claims were absolutely subversive of those of all other gods. It was the fundamental article of the Jewish religion, that their God was Jehovah, and God alone; and that all the Heathen deities had no power or influence over the affairs of mankind, within any limits whatsoever. And therefore the question never could be, Who is the *mightiest*, Jehovah or the rival gods of Paganism?

the tutelary god of Israel, (as he was by Rabshakeh, 2 Kings xviii. 33, 34,) he vindicated his own proper character as Jehovah God, and sole monarch of the universe. 2 Kings xix. 14—35.

* That, in the case of a contest, he who performs the *most* and *greatest* miracles gives evidence only of *superior* power, not of *absolute supremacy*, was shewn above, ch. ii. sect. vi. p. 51—53. And how unsatisfactory the bishop's solution is, when applied to the works of the magicians in Egypt, will be shewn below, ch. iv. sect. i.

† Exod. iii. 15.

Any

Any signs of power given by the latter would have overthrown the doctrine of Jehovah's prophets, and infringed his prerogative as the sole author and sovereign of nature. If he was Jehovah, there could be no other sovereign of nature: and if there was any other sovereign of nature, he was not Jehovah, or the only living and true God. Accordingly we find in fact, that in the contest between the Israelites and Egyptians, and in every succeeding contest, the question was, Is the God of Israel Jehovah, in the full and proper sense of that expression? In this there was another question involved, Are any of the reputed gods of the Heathens truly Gods? or do they possess any of that power and dominion ascribed to them by their worshippers? And how was this question to be decided, but by miracles? A power and dominion over nature cannot be more effectually established, than by changing or suspending the course of its operations. Accordingly Pharaoh demanded of Moses a sign*, as a proof of his mission from Jehovah. And in the grand contest beween Elijah and the prophets of Baal; as the question was, Who is God, Jehovah or Baal? so both sides agreed to have it determined by a single miracle. Elijah had no conception that Jehovah and Baal could both of them be gods, one of them greater than the other. On the contrary, he supposes one of them only could be God; or have any dominion over nature, or power of working a miracle, and consequently a title to worship, when he says, *If Jehovah be God, follow him:*

* Exod. vii. 9.

but

*but if Baal, follow him**. The proposal he afterwards made of deciding the controversy by a single miracle, (not by the greater in number or degree,) *The God that answereth by fire, let him be God*, whether Baal or Jehovah†; is a demonstration that Elijah had no expectation that both Baal and Jehovah could interpose in this miraculous manner; because this would rather have proved both of them to be gods, than that Jehovah alone was God; which was the point to be decided: And had Baal answered by fire, this point had been determined against Elijah, and he must have acknowledged that Baal was God; answering by fire being, in his opinion, a valid proof of a divine interposition; the very touchstone by which he himself had desired the claims both of Jehovah and Baal might be tried, in order effectually to distinguish which were genuine, and which were counterfeit. Elijah allowed the priests of Baal to make the experiment first, and to try to engage him to answer them by fire; firmly assured of his utter impotence, and desirous of exposing him in the presence of his deluded worshippers. All application to Baal being ineffectual, Elijah prayed for fire from heaven, not to manifest the *superiority* of the God of Israel, but his sole Divinity, *that it might be known that Jehovah was God in Israel, and Jehovah God*‡. When the fire of Jehovah fell and consumed the sacrifice, the people acknowledged, *Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God*§. This conclusion was just, upon the

* 1 Kings xviii. 21. † Ver. 24.
‡ Ver. 36, 37. § Ver. 39.

principle

principle maintained above*, that, the laws of nature being ordained by God, their operation and effects cannot be controlled by any superior beings besides him. If this principle be false, could a single miracle confute the claims of the Heathen deities, and demonstrate Jehovah to be the only sovereign of nature? But it is, I hope, needless to shew that revelation confirms the dictates of reason on this subject. Here we have no other view than to illustrate the state of the antient controversy between the prophets of God and idolaters; and by that means to confirm what has been already urged to shew that the Scriptures represent all miracles as the prerogatives of the one eternal Divinity, and as proofs of his being Jehovah, and God alone. They do this in a manner that plainly shews their having no apprehension that any superior beings whatever, besides God, had a power of producing these effects.

SECTION VI.

The Scriptures uniformly represent all miracles as being, in themselves, an absolute demonstration of the divinity of the mission and doctrine of the prophets, at whose instance they are performed; and never direct us to regard their doctrines as a test of the miracles being the effect of a divine interposition.

WHEN God commissioned Moses to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt, he at the same time enabled him to perform signs and wonders, to procure him

* Ch. ii. sect. iii.

credit

credit both with the Israelites* and the Egyptians†. Miracles were the only testimonials urged with either, in proof of his mission from Jehovah. And it was also upon this evidence alone that the laws of Moses were afterwards received by the Israelites as divine injunctions‡, and his authority supported amongst them; though they were too much disposed to disobey the one, and murmur against the other§. They did not however try his miracles by his laws; nor dispute the divine original of the former, merely because many of the latter were expensive and painful, and had no intrinsic excellence to recommend them. Nor did Moses, when he proved by miracles his commission to require of Pharaoh the release of the Israelites, appeal to the equity of his demand, in confirmation of the divinity of his works; though he might have shewn that the bondage of the Israelites was the highest reproach to the gratitude of the Egyptians, whose country had been saved by Joseph, and a violation of all the laws of hospitality, and of all the promises of protection and kindness made to the Israelites when they first came into Egypt. But Moses rested the proof of his authority upon the sole

* Exod. iv. 1—5, 8, 9. See also Numb. xvi. 28—30. Deut. iv. 39.

† Exod. vii. 8. ‡ Exod. xix. 3—8. ch xxiv. 3.

§ When the Israelites charged Moses with ambition and usurpation, he appeals to a miracle in proof of his divine commission, Numb. xvi. 13, 28, 29, *Hereby ye shall know that the Lord has sent me.* ——*If the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, &c.* It was by a miracle likewise that Samuel convinced the Israelites of their fault in asking a king, 1 Sam. xii. 16—19.

evidence

evidence of his works, as plainly discovering the hand of God. The succeeding prophets* under the Old Testament proceeded upon the same principle; and appealed to miracles alone, as an unquestionable demonstration of their mission from God. Elijah in particular thus prays to God to answer him by fire, *Let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word*†. The very same use is made of the miracles of the New Testament. But this being a point which has been controverted both by the adversaries and advocates of the Christian revelation, (the former sometimes denying that the miracles of the Gospel were designed to attest Christ's divine mission, and the latter often asserting that they are urged only as conditional attestations of it,) I will examine distinctly the passages which speak of the author and end of the Gospel miracles; especially as I do not remember to have seen them collected together, much less placed in (what appears to me to be) their true light. The miracles of Christ and his apostles shall be considered separately.

I.

With regard to our Saviour, just before he entered upon his public ministry he was qualified for the discharge of it by receiving *the Spirit of God without*

* Josh. iii. 7. ch. iv. 14. 1 Sam. x. 1—7. ch xii 16—18. 1 Kings xiii. 3. ch. xvii. 24. 2 Kings v. 15. In like manner with regard to prophecies, by their accomplishment it shall be known that a prophet has been amongst them, Ezek. xxxiii 33. Jerem. xxviii. 9. 1 Sam. iii. 19, 20. Compare Deut. xviii. 22.

† 1 *Kings* xviii. 36.

measure,

*measure**, or for universal and perpetual use; and not, as the former prophets had received it, for a limited time and occasion. Accordingly he refers both his doctrine and his works to God, as their author. *He spake as the Father taught him and gave him commandment*†. His miracles he styles *the works of God*, and *the works of his Father*‡; which would have been an improper mode of expression, if any one else could have done the same works. Christ expressly ascribes them to *the finger* or *Spirit of God*§; and affirms on one occasion, *The Son can do nothing of himself*‖; and on another, *The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself. But the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works*⸸, whereby those words are confirmed. He represents them as a visible and very conspicuous display of the *glory*** *and power*†† *of God*. His disciples, in like manner, speak of

* John iii. 34.

† John viii. 28. ch. xii. 49, 50. In farther proof of his referring his doctrine to God, the following passages might be appealed to, ch. viii. 26, 38, 40. ch. vii. 16. 17. ch. xiv. 10, 24. Agreeably hereto we are told, *that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, anointing him to preach the Gospel*, Luke iv. 18, and that after his resurrection *he through the Holy Ghost gave commandments unto the apostles*, Acts i. 2. See Whitby's preface to St. John's Gospel.

‡ John ix. 3. ch. x. 37. ch. v. 36.

§ Matt. xii. 28. Luke xi. 20.

‖ John v. 19.

⸸ John xiv. 10.

** Ch. xi. 4. In the 40th verse Christ, when going to raise Lazarus, thus addresses Martha, *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?*

†† *To whom hath* THE ARM OF THE LORD *been revealed?* John xii. 37.

of them as works, *which God did by him**; clare, *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with t Ghost and with power, who went about doin and healing all that were oppressed with the d God was with him*†.

Agreeably to this representation of their Christ appeals to his miracles as a demonstrat a partial and conditional, but a complete and demonstration) of his mission from God. the Jews, *The works which my Father has giv finish* (or *to perform*), *the same works that I witness of me that the Father has sent me.* E *Even the Father himself which hath sent me ha witness of me*‡. Just as he was going to perf particular miracle, he made a public appeal *that men* (by that single miracle) *might beli the Father had sent him*§. And St. Peter sty *a man approved of God* (or *conspicuously demo by God*‖ to be his messenger) *by miracles, an ders, and signs.* This language of Christ apostles implies, that his miracles were work priate to the Father, and therefore, in themsel

38. It is with a peculiar reference to the miracles of Cl he frequently affirms, that *seeing him* was *seeing God who sent* xii. 44, 45. ch. xiv. 9—12. ch. xv. 24.

* Acts ii. 22.

† Ch. x. 33. St. Luke also says, ch. iv. 1, 14. *Jesus ret power of the Spirit into Galilee*, which is explained Matt. iv. 2 *healed all manner of diseases.*

‡ John v. 36, 37. See also ch. viii. 18, 28, 29, 42, 54. ch.

§ Ch. xi. 41, 42.

‖ Απο του Θεου αποδεδειγμενον. Acts ii. 22.

apart from all consideration of his doctrine, a full demonstration of his divine mission.

The miracles of Christ were farther designed to evince his peculiar character as *the Messiah* or *anointed*. But here it will be necessary previously to consider what is included in this character: a point which has been overlooked* by our best writers upon the subject of miracles; and the overlooking of which has, I apprehend, been one cause of their not discerning the peculiar and direct design of the New Testament miracles, or at least occasioned their speaking of it in too vague and indeterminate a manner. The kings of Israel (those viceroys of God, who sat upon God's throne,) were installed in their office by the ceremony of anointing them with oil, and very frequently distinguished by this title†, *the Lord's anointed*. When this term is applied to Christ, it conveys to us the idea of *a king immediately appointed by God, and qualified for that office by a divine unction*, the unlimited communication and perpetual residence of the Holy Ghost. The two grand branches of Christ's regal office are *legislation*, and *the distribution of rewards and punishments amongst his subjects*, according to their different behaviour. In antient

* I take notice of this oversight, not merely for the sake of shewing the necessity of here laying before the reader a fuller account of the ends proposed by the Gospel miracles than any that has been given by former writers; but also of shewing in general, how necessary it is to examine every thing ourselves, without trusting to the representation even of learned, judicious, and candid men.

† This title was not indeed peculiar to the kings of Israel; but it belonged to them eminently.

times

times kings were also *judges**; and indeed t
nistration of justice is a principal act of gov
and inseparable from the office of sovereigi
An authority to dispense pardon is likewise
tial branch of the royal prerogative, and s
was necessary the sovereign of mankind sho
vested with, in order to his encouraging
jects, who were in a state of guilt and re
God, to return to their allegiance†. And
dom of Christ not being of a temporal n
spiritual and heavenly, and the chief bless
being such as could not be enjoyed in th
extent in this world, or even in the future s
mankind continued under the power of deat
absolutely necessary that Christ should be a
by God to raise the dead, in order to th
judged, and either rewarded or condemne
the other exercises of his royal power ar
many preparations for the last grand act, o

* *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judge*
Ps. ii. 10. Compare 1 Sam. viii. 5, 7. Our Saviour de
judicial power belongs to him as the Messiah: *The Father*
authority to execute judgment also, because he is the son of man,
He speaks of himself under the character of *a king*, v
scribes his coming to judge the world, Matt. xxv. 34.
calls his appearance as the judge of the living and t
kingdom, 2 Tim. iv. 1. See Acts x. 42.

† Acts v. 31. ch. x. 43. It is observed in Livy, Dec.
that what renders *the kingly government* dear to the peo
berty of pardoning: Regem hominem esse, à quo impe
ubi injuria opus sit: esse gratiæ locum, esse beneficio
ignoscere posse.

‡ See John v. 27—29.

all the children of God in a blessed immortality. The notion we are to form of Jesus as the Messiah, is that of the (promised and) divinely constituted *prince* and *Saviour**. In his *legislative* and *judicial* capacity he is spoken of as *a king:* and when he exercises his power in dispensing divine pardon, in recovering mankind from the dominion of death, and putting the righteous of every age and nation into the possession of eternal life, he is described as a *Saviour*. But, strictly speaking, this latter office is included in the former. Christ's royalty would have been but an empty title, without the power of distributing rewards and punishments, to enforce the obedience of his subjects. In a word, the Messiahship of Jesus denotes his *regal* commission and power, or his right by divine designation to dominion and judicature over mankind. And this is what the miracles of Christ were designed to establish.

At the first opening of his ministry, he proclaimed the joyful tidings of the approach or arrival of the Messiah, or of the kingdom of heaven; asserted his own authority to give laws, and to administer government in this kingdom of God; and at the same time urged his miracles as a full and adequate proof of his regal investiture and commission. In opposition to those who accused him of a confederacy with Satan, he affirms, *If I cast out dæmons by the Spirit of God, then is the kingdom of God come unto you*†: which implied that he himself was the person under whom

* Acts v. 31.

† Matt. xii. 28. Luke xi. 20.

that

that kingdom was to be erected. To those who desired him, in case he was the Christ, plainly to declare it, he replied, *I told you who I am, and ye believed not. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.*——*Say ye of him, whom the Father has sanctified* (or set apart to the office of the Messiah,) *and sent into the world* (under so high a character,) *Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God*? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me*, i. e. my testimony, BELIEVE THE WORKS, which are the testimony of God: *that*, by these visible displays of his power and authority, *ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him*†. To his disciples he speaks the same language, *Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me* FOR THE VERY WORKS' SAKE‡: which are the most authentic testimonials of my union with the Father, and of his dwelling and operating in me by a permanent influence; so that, properly, it is God who speaks and acts by me. In answer to that inquiry, by a deputation to Jesus from the baptist, *Art thou He that should come?* he refers them to his miracles for satisfaction §. And because his miracles evinced his dignity

* *The Son of God*, and *the Messiah* or *the Christ*, are equivalent terms, Matt. xvi. 16. John vi. 69. Matt. xxvi. 63. Luke xxii. 66, 70. John i. 34—41. Compare Prov. iv. 3. Ps. ii. 7, 12. 2 Sam. vii. 14.

† John x. 24, 25, 36—38. ch. viii. 28, 29.

‡ Ch. xiv. 10, 11.

§ *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, &c.* Matt. xi. 5. Luke vii. 22.

and

and authority as the Messiah, he affirms their intention to be, *that the Son of God might be glorified hereby**. His divine commission and prerogative to dispense spiritual blessings, is particularly pointed out, as a most essential branch of his office, and at the same time most remote from the conception of the worldly-minded Jews. When he healed the maladies of those who from a principle of faith applied to him, he declared he did it with this view, *that men might know that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins*†. And to the end they might regard him as the dispenser of eternal life to good men, after having raised them from the dead; before he called Lazarus from the grave, he styles himself *the resurrection and the life*, and assured his disciples, *He that believes on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*‡. The power of restoring the dead to life, he elsewhere speaks of as the immediate gift of his Father; and then proceeds to assert his power to call all mankind from their graves, that they might be adjudged to everlasting life or death §. And inasmuch as all his miracles, by proving him to be the Messiah, established his commission from God to raise the dead, (without which he could neither judge

*John xi. 4. By his first miracle, *he manifested forth his glory*, John ii. 11.

†Mark ii. 10, 11. Christ's reasoning here supposes, that the power of healing diseases was no less the prerogative of God than that of pardoning sins; and therefore that neither could be communicated to any, but by God alone.

‡John xi. 25, 26.

§Ch. v. 20, 21, 25, 29. See ch. vi. 39, 40, 44, 45.

his

his subjects, nor bestow upon them the promised recompense;) we find him upon all occasions, and particularly when he fed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, asserting his character as the dispenser of eternal life*; adding, *For him has God the Father sealed*, his miracles being as authentic credentials of his Messiahship, as the royal seal is of a commission from a prince whose seal it is: which expression strongly implies, that miracles are a seal which none but God can use. If impostors are allowed to perform them, they are no authentic proof of a divine mission, any more than the royal seal would be of an order from a prince, who permitted others, and even his enemies, to have a duplicate or counterpart of the same. In a word, all Christ's miracles were performed (and all his prophecies† likewise were delivered) with exactly the same view with which they were committed to writing, *that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through his name*‡. The *effect* they produced was answerable to this design of their performance. They carried along with them a conviction of their divinity: *No man*, said Nicodemus to our Saviour, *can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him*§. And *the multitude*, when they saw his works, *marvelled, and glorified God, who had*

* *The Son of man shall give unto you eternal life*, John vi. 27.

† *Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he*, John xiii. 19. See ch. ii. 22. ch. xiv. 29. ch. xvi. 4. 30. 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Rev. xix. 10.

‡ John xx. 31. See ch. xi. 15. § John iii. 2.

*given such power unto men**. Accordingly his miracles wrought a persuasion in some, that Jesus was a divine prophet†; and in others, that he was the Messiah†. If miracles were not conclusive and even cogent arguments of a divine mission, the resistance of these means of conviction would not have been upbraided by Christ with so much severity, nor made a ground of the most aggravated condemnation‡. On the other hand, Christ declares, *If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did*, (that is, such as none but a truly divine messenger can perform,) *they had not had sin: but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my Father*§.

On

* Matt. ix. 8. See John ix. 33.

† Matt. xii. 23. John ii. 11, 22, 23. ch. iii. 2. ch. iv. 45, 52, 53. ch. vi. 14. ch. vii. 31. ch. ix. 35—38. ch. x. 44. ch. xi. 45, 47, 48. ch. xii. 11. Luke xxiv. 19.

‡ Matt. x. 15. ch. xi. 20—24. ch. xii. 31. John xii. 37. ch. xv. 22—25. Heb. ii. 3, 4. ch. vi. 4. God proceeded to execute judgment upon Pharaoh, upon his not yielding to the evidence of the first miracle: and Zacharias was struck dumb, for not giving credit to a single divine appearance: which seems to imply, that every miracle bears upon it the visible stamp of divinity. And wherein does the common doctrine concerning miracles being wrought by evil spirits, differ from *the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, (so severely condemned in those who imputed Christ's cure of dæmoniacs to the assistance of dæmons,) except in its not arguing malice against Christ? The Jews referred only one species of Christ's miracles to the devil: many Christians assert, that most, if not all, his miracles might be wrought by evil spirits.

§ John xv. 24. This passage has been generally thought to affirm, that the personal miracles of Christ were *greater* than those of Moses, or any of the antient prophets; which was scarce true at that time. Christ is here distinguishing himself from all *false* prophets, whom

On the third day after he had suffered death, under the false imputation of blasphemy and imposture, he was raised from the dead: a miracle which the Scripture ascribes *to the working of God's mighty power* *, and considers as the capital and most authentic declaration of Jesus's being *the Son of God* †, and the true Messiah; and to which he had often referred his enemies for conviction ‡. The regal power of the Messiah including in it a judicial as well as a legislative authority; the resurrection of Christ, and his advancement to the full possession of his regal power, is spoken of as a completion of the evidence, and as a commanding argument of his being appointed to judge the world §.

II.

With regard to the miracles performed by the apostles of Christ after his ascension into heaven, as they are ascribed to the agency of the Spirit of God ‖, even to *the Spirit of truth which proceedeth, (cometh forth) from the Father* ⁂, and is dispensed through the

the Jews were too much inclined to follow, even without any evidence of their mission, and from a mere relish of their corrupt doctrine. The expression is somewhat parallel to John x. 37, *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.* Both these passages teach us in the strongest manner, that miracles are works which no impostor, nor any but God, can perform, and in themselves authentic proofs of a divine mission.

* Ephes. i. 19. Col. ii. 12. † Rom. i. 4.

‡ John ii. 18. Matt. xii. 38. ch. xvi. 1.

§ Acts xvii. 31. In this passage, πιστιν παρασχων πασιν, *having offered faith to all men;* faith is put for the *evidence* afforded, or the *persuasive argument* whereby it is wrought.

‖ Rom. xv. 19. 1 Cor. xii. 4—11. Heb. ii. 4. ⁂ John xv. 26.

mediation

mediation of Christ*; so they are urged as a full vindication of the character of Christ from the aspersions and calumnies of his enemies, as a proof of the truth of his resurrection and advancement to celestial dignity and power, as a confirmation of his claims to be a divine messenger and the Son of God, as a testimony of God and of Christ to those whom he commissioned to assert these claims, or to attest the facts (his resurrection in particular) on which they were founded†; or, in other words, as an indubitable divine testimony to the doctrine they preached, when they taught Jesus to be the Messiah, by faith in whom pardon and eternal life were to be obtained. Our Saviour promised his followers, that *they should do greater works than he had done, because he went to the Father*, (or was to be exalted to power in his presence and kingdom,) when, as the effect and evidence of his exaltation, he was to receive from the Father, and dispense to his followers, the Holy Ghost‡. *And when he is come, he will* (by the miracles he will enable you to perform in my name) *reprove* (or rather *convince*) *the world of sin*, of their heinous guilt in rejecting and condemning me to death as an impostor, *and of* the *righteousness* of my character and the

* Tit. iii. 6. *The Father*, says our Lord, *will send him in my name. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter* or *advocate. I will send him unto you from the Father.* John xiv. 26. ch. xv. 26.

† The apostles received their commission from Christ, John xx. 21. ch. xvii. 18, and were appointed to be the witnesses of his resurrection, ch. xv. 27. Acts i. 8. ch. ii. 22, 23. ch. x. 39, 41. ch. xiii. 31. 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15.

‡ John xiv 12. ch. xv. 26. Acts ii. 33—36.

justice

justice of my claims, *and of* the equity of that *judgment* which will be executed upon my enemies*. *He shall testify of me*†. *He shall glorify me*‡. *At that day*, says Christ, *ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you*§. He intercedes with his Father, on the behalf both of his apostles and of their converts, *that they all may be one*, (by a common participation of the Spirit,) *as*‖ *thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world* (by the visible operations of that Spirit, which I shall receive from thee, and impart to them,) *may believe that thou hast sent me.* And *the glory* (the power and honour of performing miracles by the Spirit) *which thou hast given me, I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* And just before his ascension he tells his disciples, *Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me*†.

Conformable to this declared intention of Christ in promising and bestowing the gifts and miracles of the Holy Ghost, are the several uses to which they are applied by the apostles. When they received the gift of tongues, St. Peter tells the Jews, *Christ being by the*

* John xvi. 8—11. † Ch. xv. 26. ‡ Ch. xvi. 14.

§ Ch. xiv. 20. ch. xvii. 21—23. Compare ch. x. 38. ch. xiv. 10, 11, cited above, and consult Dr. Whitby on these several places, and on Ephes. iv. 4.

‖ John xvii. 21—23. *As*, in this place, denotes *resemblance*, not *equality; for in Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

† *Acts* i. 8.

right

*right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this which ye now see and hear**. And from this effusion of the Spirit, as well as from the testimony of prophecy, he argues *that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ**. *We*, says the same apostle afterwards, *are witnesses of these things*, (viz. the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus,) *and so also is the Holy Ghost*†. The Scriptures likewise inform us on other occasions, that *with great power* (by very illustrious miracles) *gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*‡. The *manner* in which the apostles performed their miracles shews that they were especially designed as an immediate testimony to the resurrection and glory of Christ. *In the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk* §, said Peter to the lame man at the gate of the temple. And he thus farther explains the intention of the miracle to the astonished multitude: *God has raised up and glorified his Son Jesus; and his name* (or power) *through faith in his name, has made this man strong.* The apostles constantly declared themselves to be the appointed witnesses of his resurrection and exaltation; and accordingly their miracles are spoken of as the attestation of God to them, in the execution of their commission. *God bore them witness, both by signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts* (or *distributions*) *of the Holy Ghost*‖: *they went forth, and*

* Acts ii. 33—36.
† Acts v. 31, 32.
‡ Ch. iv. 30, 33.
§ Ch. iii. 6. Compare ch. iv. 30.
‖ Heb. ii. 4.

preached

*preached every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following**: *the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands*†. St. Paul, in particular, considered supernatural interpositions in his favour, as manifestations of *the life*‡ of Christ, *and as a proof of Christ speaking in him*§, and expressly calls his miracles *the signs of an apostle*‖. He likewise tells his converts, *that his Gospel came not unto them in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance* (or with the fullest conviction of its truth); *and that his preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*†. The *effect* produced by these miracles corresponds to and confirms the account here given of their primary declared intention: for they demanded and procured an absolute credit to the doctrine and testimony of the performers, *concerning the kingdom of God***, *and the name of Jesus*

* Mark xvi. 20.

† Acts xiv. 3. By *the word, the word of God, the Gospel, the word of the Gospel, the word of the kingdom*, (which are often used as synonymous terms) the Scripture means the joyful news of the approach or arrival of the Messiah, and the preaching Jesus to be that very person, or the ruler and redeemer of the people of God. Compare Luke iii. 18, 21. ch. viii. 11. ch. ix. 2, 6. Matt. xi. 5. Acts viii. 4. ch. x. 36, 37. ch. xi. 1, 19, 20. ch. xii. 24. ch. xiii. 42—49. ch. xv. 7, 35. ch. xvii. 3, 11, 13. ch. xviii. 4, 11.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11. § Ch. xiii. 3.

‖ Ch. xii. 12. Compare 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20. and what is urged above, ch. iii. sect. iv. p. 199—200.

† 1 Thess. i. 5. 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. ** See above, note †.

Christ.

*Christ**. And St. Paul tells us that the Gentiles were made obedient to the faith, *through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God,* and presented as an acceptable offering to God, *being sanctified by the Holy Ghost*†, imparted to the first Christian converts in many extraordinary gifts.

The passages already cited chiefly refer to the miracles performed by the apostles for the conviction of unbelievers: I will now set down the passages which express the intention of those spiritual gifts which the apostles bestowed upon believers, that we may see the whole subject in one view. The gifts conferred upon the Christian converts, besides being a new confirmation of the Christian faith, or of the doctrine and testimony of the apostles concerning Christ‡, were farther designed as an evidence of the divine favour to all who received and obeyed the Gospel, though they did not submit to the law of Moses; as a seal of the pardon of their past sins, and a pledge of their adoption to eternal life§; as a proof of their election of God to be his church and people‖; and

* Acts viii. 6, 7. See ch. ii. 33, 41—43. ch. ix. 35, 42. ch. xiii. 12. Rom. xv. 18.

† Rom. xv. 16, 18, 19. It appears from this passage, that the winning men over to the faith of Christ, was the design with which the miracles were performed, as well as the effect which they produced.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 5, 6, 7. 2 Cor. i. 18—22.

§ Acts ii. 38. Rom. v. 1, 5. ch. viii. 14—16, 23. 2 Cor. i. 22. ch. v. 5. Gal. iv. 6, 7. Ephes. i. 13, 14. ch. iv. 30. Compare Luke xx. 36.

‖ 1 Thess. i. 4, 5.

as a means also of supporting the worship of God, and thereby of promoting the edification and improvement of Christians, as well as the conviction of unbelievers, who might casually attend the Christian assemblies*. With regard to the miraculous judgments inflicted upon such as wickedly opposed, corrupted, or disobeyed the Gospel; they were designed more immediately for the punishment and reformation of offenders †; though they ultimately terminated in the confirmation of the Christian doctrine.

The clear and explicit view, which the foregoing passages of Scripture give us of the precise intention of the miracles of the New Testament, may serve to rectify the mistakes men have run into upon this subject. In the numerous passages here cited, the divinity of these miracles, considered in themselves, is always either expressly asserted or manifestly implied; and they are accordingly urged as a decisive and absolute proof of the divinity of the doctrine and testimony of their performers, without ever taking into consideration the nature of the doctrine or of the testimony to be confirmed.

To what is here advanced some will object, "that our Saviour, when the Pharisees ascribed his miracles to a confederacy with dæmons, appealed to his doctrine in refutation of the calumny:" *If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall hen his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast*

* 1 Cor. xii. 7. ch. xiv. 3, 22, 25, 31. Ephes. iv. 8—16.

† 1 Tim. i. 20. Acts xiii. 11. 2 Cor. x. 6. 1 Cor. v. 5. 2 Cor. *xiii. 10.*

out

*out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges**. It is supposed that our Saviour in this passage affirms, that it was absurd to ascribe his miracles to the devil, because *his doctrine* was most opposite to all that an evil spirit could wish to be propagated in the world; and that if Christ was an accomplice of the devil, then the devil was subverting his own interests, ruining his own kingdom. This objection, I apprehend, proceeds upon two mistakes.

1st. It supposes that the Pharisees ascribed the miracles of Christ *in general* to a confederacy with dæmons: a supposition altogether groundless. It appears from the history†, that this calumny, as it was occasioned by, so it concerned only, one particular species of his miracles, the cure of dæmoniacs; whose disorders were thought to be caused by the influence of dæmons; from whence it was concluded, that they might be removed by the influence of dæmons. There is no intimation given us, that the enemies of Christ ever extended this reproach to any of his other miracles; faithfully as the evangelists have recorded every other calumny against him, and particular as they have been in their relation of this. And indeed it is certain, that the Pharisees neither did nor could ascribe the miracles of Christ in general to a dæmoniacal agency. They *could not* do it; I mean, not without gross self-contradiction: because they al-

* Matt. xii. 26, 27.

† The following are the only instances of this calumny on record: Matt. ix. 32. ch. xii. 22. Mark iii. 22. Luke xi. 14.

lowed miracles to be a proof of a divine mission, upon which alone their religion was founded; and because many of the miracles of Christ were the very same with those which their own prophets had produced as divine credentials. And that they *did not* ascribe them to dæmons, appears from their behaviour on some remarkable occasions. When they were unable to deny the reality of Christ's miracles, at a loss to evade the conviction of them, and fully sensible of the dangerous consequences to their superstition and usurpation, from their gaining credit; in a word, when reduced by them to the utmost perplexity; even then they did not so much as attempt to argue, that the works of Christ proceeded from any evil spirits*, but rather acknowledged God was the author of them. Thus, to the man born blind, on whom Christ had bestowed sight, they say, *Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner*†. They were willing to allow that God might exercise his power, and convey his favours, by a profligate impostor, rather than that any but God could open the eyes of a person born blind. In this sense they were understood by the man on whom the miracle had been performed, with whom they were disputing; as appears from his reply, *God heareth not sinners*‡, cannot confirm by miracles false pretensions to a divine commission. It has, I think, been universally affirmed, that the Pharisees ascribed Christ's miracles in general to a confederacy with Satan; though

* John xi. 47, 48. ch. xii. 19. Acts iv. 14, 16.
† John ix. 24. ‡ Ver. 31.

the

the contrary be so very evident. How dangerous is it to adopt any opinion, until it has been strictly and impartially examined!

2dly. The objection we are considering farther supposes, that our Lord in his reply refers the Pharisees to his doctrine for satisfaction: whereas there is not one word said in relation to that, however opposite it was to the interests of the devil. As the objection referred only to one particular kind of miracles; so does the answer, which contains an argument in confutation of the objection drawn from the *miracle itself*. Our Lord is here addressing himself to those who did not acknowledge, and were unwilling to be convinced of, his authority; and therefore argues with them (as he was wont* to do), upon their own principles, in order to silence those whom he could not instruct†: telling them "that it was unreasonable to impute his cure of dæmoniacs to the assistance of the prince of dæmons; since, if the miracle consisted (as they apprehended, and the objection implied,) in the ejection of dæmons, it was in its very nature an act of hostility against them; and Satan could not be supposed to assist in overturning his own empire." With the same view of exposing the ab-

* Matt. xi. 12, 13. ch. xxv. 24, 25. Luke xviii. 1—7.

† To the malicious Pharisees, who had been endeavouring to insnare him, Christ proposes this question: *If David call Christ Lord, how is he his Son?* Matt. xxii. 45, not for the sake of solving the difficulty, but to leave his enemies speechless. And when they asked him, *Who gave him his authority?* Matt. xxi. 23; he answered this question with another, to silence those who would not be convinced.

surdity

surdity of this calumny, upon their own principles and pretensions, he adds, *If I by Beelzebub cast out dæmons, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.* By the children of the Pharisees we are to understand their disciples * and followers, or the Jews who undertook † to cast out dæmons in the name of the God of Abraham, but who certainly did not succeed in their attempts ‡. And

* In like manner, by *the sons of the prophets* we are to understand the disciples of the prophets.

† Acts xiii. 19. That the Jews practised exorcisms, farther appears from the testimonies of Josephus, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Theophilus, and Origen, cited by Grotius, Hammond and Whitby on Matt. xii. 27.

‡ See Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 84. To what is urged by this excellent writer to discredit the testimony of the Fathers to the efficacy of the Jewish exorcisms, I would add, that Origen, notwithstanding his allowing to the Jews in his time the power of casting out devils, declares, *That the Jews, since the coming of Christ, are entirely deserted, have no token of the divine presence amongst them, have no prophets, no miracles,* Contra Cels. l. ii. p. 62. and l. vii. p. 337. And Justin Martyr speaks of the prophetic gifts as transferred from the Jews to the Christians, Dial. Tryph. p. 308, 315. Indeed the Jewish exorcisms as described by their own historian (Joseph. Ant. Jud. l. viii. c. ii. § 5.) are too absurd to be confuted. Accordingly the Jews who had been accustomed to the exorcisms of their countrymen (in which they made use of magical ceremonies and natural remedies), when they saw the disorders imputed to dæmons perfectly and instantaneously cured by Christ, were struck with the highest astonishment, Luke xi. 14. Mark i. 27, 28. ch. v. 20. Luke iv. 36, 37. The sight was *new*, and the miracle carried an immediate conviction of its divinity, *They were amazed at the mighty power of God*, Luke ix. 43, and affirm, *It was never so seen in Israel*, Matt. ix. 33. Compare Mark ii. 12. The seventy disciples triumphed

in

And our Lord (without either charging their doctrine with absurdity, or making any mention of the reasonableness of his own) reproaches the manifest inconsistency of their conduct, in imputing his cure of dæmoniacs to Beelzebub, when they ascribed to God the pretended success of their own exorcisms; and at the same time taxes them as persons of the most shameless disposition, in countenancing the grossest impostures, while they resisted a miracle supported by the clearest evidence. In the sequel of his address to the Pharisees, instead of referring them to his doctrine, he urges the miracle itself as a full and decisive proof of his being the Messiah *: which it could not be, if it could have been performed by those who opposed and blasphemed his character and claims. And when he adds, that the ejection of dæmons argued a power (not only opposite, but) *superior* † to that of Beelzebub; he still reasons from the nature of the miracle alone, according to their idea of it. He closes his address in the same strain: "If it be a just maxim, that he is to be regarded as an enemy, who only refuses his assistance ‡; will you account me a friend and confederate with Satan, who directly oppose and dispossess him?"

in their cure of dæmoniacs, the most wonderful and distinguishing privilege, Luke x. 17; and the people regarded this miracle as the characteristic of the Messiah, crying out at the sight of it, *Is not this the Son of David?* Matt. xii. 23. Nay, the Pharisees themselves were never so far blinded by malice as to oppose the Jewish exorcisms to Christ's cure of dæmoniacs: a plain proof that the difference between them was too great to admit of any comparison.

* Matt. xii. 28. † Ver. 29. ‡ Ver. 30.

As there is no proof that our Lord ever did, so it is utterly impossible that our Lord ever should, refer the Jews to his doctrine, in order to convince them of the divinity of his works, or to satisfy them that those works were not performed by the assistance of the devil. For, notwithstanding his miracles, they disputed his divine mission and authority, on account of the apprehended absurdity and impiety of his doctrine, and his extraordinary character and pretensions as the Son of God. This was the case of those who reproached him with blasphemy, when he asserted his commission to forgive sin, though at the same time he confirmed it by a miracle*; and of those who disparaged his multiplication of the loaves and fishes, because he spoke to them of his sufferings and death†. Indeed the doctrine of his cross was a ground of general offence both to Jews and Gentiles, and, instead of giving authority to the miracles of the Gospel, stood in need of their assistance to procure it a reception. The Pharisees, who (as we have already observed) could not but allow the divinity of his works, did nevertheless conclude, from his performing them on the *sabbath-day*, (and thus subverting those superstitions which they reverenced as the most essential branches of religion,) that he must needs be a wicked impostor‡. And the true reason why our Saviour, during the course of his personal ministry, did not more clearly and explicitly reveal some parts of his doctrine, was, that the prejudices of the Jews

* *Mark* ii. 7.

† John vi. 30, 31, 41, 60, 66.

‡ *John* ix. 14, 16.

against

against them were too stubborn to be overcome by the clearest evidence of their divinity *. To have directed them, therefore, to try his miracles by the doctrines they were intended to attest, would only have so much the more confirmed them in their disbelief of the Gospel. Even after the resurrection of Christ, when the Gospel was proposed to them by the apostles in its fullest evidence, and the right of the Gentiles to all the privileges of the Christian church, without submitting to the Jewish law, was vindicated by the miraculous donation of the Holy Ghost to Cornelius and other uncircumcised Gentiles; yet circumcision was still insisted upon by many, as a necessary term of Christian communion.

It is to little purpose therefore to plead, as the advocates of Christianity are apt to do, that the nature of the doctrines which miracles are designed to confirm will serve to point out the author of the works; inasmuch as this can do no service to Christianity. For the divinely authorized teachers of it did not, and, considering the prejudices of the first

* If Christ had made his doctrine a test of the divinity of his miracles, it would have been necessary for him to have revealed his *whole* doctrine, before he required men to receive him as a divine messenger on account of his miracles: for how could they judge whether those parts of his doctrine which he had not revealed, were worthy of God or not? Nevertheless, long after Christ had required men to receive him because of his works, he tells his own disciples, *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now*, John xvi. 12. Even at this day, no man, on the principle we here oppose, can regard the miracles of Christ as divine works, unless he be previously assured that he perfectly understands the whole Christian revelation.

converts,

converts, could not, make this use of its doctrines. Had there been any ambiguity in the proof from miracles, it would have been rejected by those to whom it was at first proposed. In latter ages learned men have adventured (such is the presumption and weakness of human reason, in many persons endowed with the largest measure of it!) to demonstrate *à priori*, that it became God to interpose for the reformation of the world, just at the time and in the manner related in the Gospel: and hence they infer the divinity of its miracles, and very often even their truth. But it is certain that, in the age in which the Gospel was published, nothing seemed more incredible than its grand doctrine, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. And Jesus and his apostles won men to the belief of this article by the evidence of prophecies and miracles, without once appealing to the internal credibility of it, or entering into any metaphysical reasonings and disquisitions concerning the dispensations of providence.

Indeed, setting all prejudice aside, the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth is a doctrine which natural reason cannot, of itself, discover to be either true or false. It is a doctrine which admits of no other proof than the testimony of prophecies and miracles, and yet can never itself serve to manifest their divine original *. A late celebrated writer seems to have been sensible of this, when he said † that we are *to distinguish between the doctrines we prove by miracles*

* See below, ch. v.

† Sherlock's Discourses, vol. i. p. 303, 304.

and

nd the doctrines by which we try miracles; and that hey are not the same doctrines. With what a numer of subtle distinctions have the learned perplexed he evidence of the Gospel, such as render it very nfit for being (what it was, by its gracious author, esigned to be) the religion of the poor and illiterate! f miracles are common to all superior beings, is it vident to an ordinary capacity, that they necessarily rgue the immediate interposition of God, when performed by a person who teaches lessons of morality; hough at the same time he alleges his miracles, in onfirmation of claims and powers quite distinct from nd superior to that of a teacher of morality, such as is being the Messiah and Son of God? Besides, if he purity of Christ's moral precepts be a necessary est of the divinity of his works, wrought to establish is extraordinary pretensions and character; how omes it to pass, that neither Christ nor his apostles ave given us any information concerning this matter? As they have no where told us what those octrines are by which we are to try their miracles; there be such doctrines, are they not chargeable ith the most criminal omission? an omission, which o human wisdom or sagacity can supply. Nay, pon the sole evidence of miracles, they demanded ith in Christ as the Messiah, *before* they instructed ien in any other doctrines; and therefore certainly ithout submitting them to previous examination: hich would have been very unreasonable, if those ther doctrines are a necessary test of the divinity of eir miracles.

The

The plain matter of fact, as it appears to me, is this: they never taught men to try their miracles either by the doctrine they were immediately designed to confirm, or by any other; but, on the contrary, taught men to judge of their doctrine by their miracles. The very *purity* of the Christian doctrine, as well as the nature of Christ's personal claims, rendered this conduct necessary. The Jews in general, and the Pagans more especially, were plunged into the deepest corruption. The latter were not only idolaters, but worshipped their gods by acts of uncleanness, such as were suitable to their apprehended natures. Would not the purity of the Gospel create in such persons a prejudice against its miracles *? What could engage them to embrace a doctrine that contradicted every sentiment and affection of their hearts, but such works as were in themselves, and according to the genuine sentiments of nature, certain and evident proofs of a divine interposition? Those therefore who endeavour to prove that miracles alone are not a sufficient criterion of a divine mission, do not attend to the nature of the Christian dispensation, nor to the state of the world when it was first erected. They likewise impeach the conduct of Christ and his apostles, and labour to destroy (though without designing it) the very foundation on which Christianity is built. We have shewn in general, that if miracles are ever performed in support of falsehood, they can never afford certain evidence of a divine commission. Least of all, then, can they serve to establish the

* See above, ch. ii. sect. v. p. 76, 77.

divine

divine mission and authority of Christ; which he requires us to acknowledge upon the account of his miracles, as in themselves a complete and sufficient evidence.

I have now laid before the reader various arguments from revelation, to prove that miracles are the peculiar works of God. Leaving others to judge of the force of those arguments, I shall conclude this chapter with observing, that what has been advanced in it concerning the author of miracles, seems to me to be confirmed by the main doctrines both of the Jewish and Christian revelations. As it is the distinguishing doctrine of the Old Testament, that Jehovah is the only true God; so it is the distinguishing doctrine of the New Testament, that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. *Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth,* whether superior *celestial* deities or inferior *terrestrial* dæmons, who are thought to interpose in human affairs, and to control the course of events, in a supernatural manner: *but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things,* who is the sovereign of the whole world; *and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things**, who is the sole agent between heaven and earth, by whose ministry God exercises his government over mankind. But if there are any other superior beings who can of themselves interpose in our affairs in a supernatural manner, and control the course of nature, without an immediate commission from God and his Christ; then it is not

* 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6. 1 Tim. ii. 5.

true

true that *there is none other God but one*, or that Christ is the only Lord of mankind. As to the former point, there has been occasion to consider it already *: with respect to the latter, St. Paul observes, that it was absurd in Christians, who professed to believe in the one Lord, to have communion with other lords or dæmons †; his power excluding theirs. He charges the Colossians *with not holding the head*, or with subverting the authority of Christ, *by the worshipping of angels*, though they only ascribed to them a delegated power and authority over mankind. Others, perhaps, may be able to reconcile these sentiments of the apostle with the power of superior beings to work miracles; to me they seem to corroborate the other proofs from revelation, that miracles argue a divine interposition.

* Ch. iii. sect. v. † 1 Cor. x. 19, 20, 21.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IV.

Shewing that the Scriptures have not recorded any Instances of real Miracles performed by the Devil; in Answer to the Objections drawn from the Case of the Magicians in Egypt, from the Appearance of Samuel after his Decease to Saul, and from our Saviour's Temptations in the Wilderness.

THE observations contained in the foregoing chapter are, I hope, sufficient to shew that the Scriptures represent miracles as works appropriate to God, and never attribute them to any other beings, unless when acting by his immediate power and commission. Nevertheless, to all this evidence it is objected, "that the Scriptures cannot consider miracles as the works of God alone; inasmuch as they relate several *instances*, in which evil spirits have actually performed genuine and incontestable miracles, without the order of God, in opposition to his messengers, and in support of error and wickedness. This," it is alleged, "appears with the clearest evidence from the works of the magicians in Egypt; from Samuel's being raised up by the sorceress at Endor; and from our Saviour's temptations in the wilderness by the evil spirit." But if these narratives establish the actual exercise of a miraculous power by the devil, the Scriptures grossly contradict themselves, when (as I think, we have already shewn) they deny this power

to

to the devil, and appropriate it to God. But befor we charge them with such gross self-contradiction we ought to inquire, (if we treat them with the sam candour we do other writings,) whether the facts the record, and the doctrine they teach, are not perfectl consistent. To this end, let us proceed to examin the several cases which are appealed to, in support c the devil's power of working miracles. We will begi with considering,

SECTION I.

The Case of the Magicians who opposed Moses.

VARIOUS are the accounts which learned men hav given of the works of the magicians in Egypt. Som have supposed that God himself enpowered the magi cians to work true miracles, and gave them an unex pected success *. But, whatever they performed, th history ascribes it, not to God, but to their inchan ments. Besides, would it not be injurious to the cha racter of the Deity to suppose that he acted in oppo sition to himself? Would he work some miracles t confront the authority of Moses, at the same tim that he was working other miracles to establish it And how, in this case, should Pharaoh know whe ther it was his duty to dismiss the Israelites, or t detain them? Would God, by a miraculous inte position, require him to do, and not to do, the ver same thing?

Others imagine that the devil assisted the magician

* Dr. Fleetwood on Miracles, discourse i. and Dr. Shuckford Connexion, vol. ii. p. 422, 2d edit.

ne

not in performing true miracles, but in deceiving the senses of the spectators, or in presenting before them delusive appearances of true miracles. But we have already shewn * in general, that with regard to the spectators, there is no manner of difference between *appearing* and *real* miracles, when the fictions or illusions are not distinguishable from realities. And if Moses had affirmed the works of the magicians to be diabolical delusions, or mere deceptions of the sight; why might not Pharaoh have affirmed the same concerning the works of Moses? If one side had pretended, for instance, that the devil secretly stole away the rods, and substituted serpents in their stead; the same might have been said by the other side: and the trial or competition must have ended in a common distrust of the senses by both parties, in confusion, or mutual reproaches of fraud and imposition.

The opinion concerning the works of the magicians, which has most generally obtained since the time of St. Austin, is, that they were not only performed by the power of the devil, but were genuine miracles, and real imitations of those of Moses. This opinion, however, has been rejected by several eminent writers, and even by some very zealous assertors † of the power of superior beings to work miracles

* Ch. i. sect. iii. p. 30, 31.

† This is the case with regard to Dr. Sykes in particular. His account of the magicians contains some excellent observations: nevertheless, his zeal to maintain the power of superior beings, and even of *evil* spirits, to work genuine miracles, prevented him from

miracles without the order of God; and who therefore might have acquiesced in the common explication of this history, had they not seen other reasons for departing from it, drawn from the circumstances of the history itself. What I shall attempt to shew, is, that the magicians did not perform works really supernatural, nor were assisted by any superior invisible being. In order to form a right judgment of this subject, it may not be improper to consider,

I. The character and pretensions of the magicians. It has been already shewn from the testimony of Heathen writers, that the antient magicians undertook to explain and to accomplish things which were deemed far beyond the reach of other men's capacities *. Conformably to this view of them given us by Pagan antiquity, we learn from the sacred writers, that they were applied to by the kings of Egypt and Babylon to interpret and decypher their dreams †, as well as to discredit the miracles of Moses. In the exercise of their art, they relied much on their superior knowledge of the secret powers of nature; yet we are not from hence to infer, with a late learned writer ‡, that they did not pretend to any commerce with

taking notice of the strongest objections against the common explication of the performances of the magicians. At the same time he has given, what I conceive to be, a very false account of their character and pretensions; and left unexplained many circumstances of the history, which are necessary to the right understanding of it.

* Ch. iii. sect. iii.

† Gen. xli. 8. Dan. ii. 10, 27. ch. iv. 7. See note * in p. 267.

‡ Dr. Sykes on Miracles, p. 142. Because witchcraft was an art, *the doctor* concludes that witches did not pretend to receive their power

with spirits or dæmons: for the extravagant prodigies they undertook to perform, their ceremonies, supplications and prayers to the gods for aid and success, demonstrate the contrary *. Magic was indeed an art, and might be learnt, like any other art, from persons skilful in it: but it was founded on the Pagan system of theology, consisted in the practice of the rites of superstition, and pretended even to a power of compelling the gods to execute their desires. The appellations by which Moses describes the magicians, agree with the account here given of their character and pretensions. They are called *wisemen*, *sorcerers*, and *magicians* †. The original word ‡ which we render *magicians*, does properly signify persons who undertake *to explain things obscure and difficult* §. It is here used as a general term, and comprehends under it *wisemen* and *sorcerers*; as is evident from the manner in which they are mentioned †. Their being denominated *wisemen* denotes their being the professors of science. With regard to the word we render *sorcerers* ‖, it is derived from a verb ⸸ which signifies to use juggling tricks,

power from dæmons: whereas it was considered as the art of setting dæmons to work.

† *Then Pharaoh also called the wisemen and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did,* &c. Exod. vii. 11.

‡ חרטמים

§ See Le Clerc on Gen. xli. 8. (where the LXX render it by a word that signifies *interpreters*,) and compare Dan. v. 11, 12. It is often explained by *genethliaci* or *sapientes nativitatum*, and is joined with astrologers and soothsayers, Dan. i. 20. ch. ii. 10, 27. ch. iv. 7.

‖ מכשפים *mecashephim.* ⸸ *Cashap.*

to delude the sight with false appearances, so as to make a thing seem otherwise than it is *; or rather to practise fascination and charms. The word is always joined in Scripture with those which signify *divination, fortune-telling*, or *revealing secrets*: and it is from the same root that the words which we render *witches* and *witchcraft* are derived †. Dr. Sykes ‡ and others have taken much fruitless pains to prove that all the names by which the magicians are described import only *legerdemain*; as if they had been jugglers by *profession* as well as *practice*. There has been occasion § to observe that the Scripture describes the Heathen gods, and those who pretended to any intercourse with them, by their usual appellations. And the names here given the magicians seem to express what they were by profession ‖: they af-

* Vid. Buxtorf. et Pagnin. in voc.

† See Exod. xxii, 18. Deut. xviii. 10. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. 2 Kings ix. 22. Mic. v. 12. Le Clerc renders the word mecashephim, *diviners*, Exod. vii. 11. And as these mecashephim (sorcerers or diviners) made use of dangerous drugs, and often employed their art in poisoning, the LXX render the word by φαρμακοι.

‡ On Miracles, p. 166. When this learned writer affirms that magic does not seem to be so old as the days of Moses in Egypt, p. 158, he contradicts both the history before us and Gen. xli. 8, which agree well with the later accounts of this art; as will appear to any one who compares what occurs here, with what was advanced above, ch. iii. sect. iii.

§ P. 161, 175.

‖ This is certainly the case as to the two words *magicians* and *sciences*; and therefore most probably is so with regard to the third, *sorcerers*. And indeed the word itself does more properly import the practice of fascination and charms, than of legerdemain.

fected

fected the reputation of superior knowledge *; and pretended both to explain and effect signs, prodigies and wonders, by observing the rules of their art. These are the persons who were called in by Pharaoh on the present occasion; and we have seen already that the Scripture denies them the ability of discovering or effecting any thing supernatural †.

II. We are, in the next place, to inquire with what design they were sent for by Pharaoh.

To suppose that they were sent for to engage the gods of Egypt to work miracles in direct opposition to the God of Israel, and thereby to invalidate Moses's divine commission, is to contradict the fundamental principles of the Pagan theology, in which the king of Egypt had been educated. Though the Heathen poets do sometimes represent the gods as quarrelling with one another, and taking different sides; some favouring a particular person, others persecuting him ‡: nevertheless, the claims of the different deities of the Pagans were supposed to be consistent with each other §; and their theology, instead of encouraging its votaries to hope that one deity should protect them from the vengeance, or act in direct defiance, of another, rather taught them to appease and gain over to their own side those deities who were supposed to be angry with them, and to protect their

* In confirmation of what is observed here and above (ch. iii. sect. iii.) concerning the magicians, I add a passage from Tacitus, Hist. l. iv. Ptolomæus omine et miraculo excitus, sacerdotibus Egyptiorum, quibus mos talia intelligere, nocturnos visus aperit.

† Ch. iii. sect iii. ‡ Ovid. Trist. l. i. eleg. ii. ver. 4.

§ See above, ch. iii. sect. v. p. 227.

enemies *. So that, had Pharaoh admitted that the works of Moses had been performed by the God of the Hebrews, he would not have applied to the Egyptian deities to oppose his operations and claims †. Besides, on the principles of Pagans, who held the doctrine of local and tutelary deities, the performance of miracles by the gods of one country would not have destroyed the claims arising from the like miracles performed by the gods of another country. And therefore, if Pharaoh considered the God of Israel as a local deity, he would not have thought Moses's commission from him invalidated by miracles performed by the gods of Egypt. But it is apparent, from the attempts of the magicians, that they did not strive to engage the gods of Egypt to limit, or control, or in any manner to oppose, the God of Israel. For, in this case, they would have endeavoured to traverse and *counteract* the aim of the adverse Divinity, not to *promote* it; and would have entreated their

* Cyrus endeavoured to appease the gods of the countries which he invaded, Xenophon. Cyropæd. l. iii. The Romans evoked the tutelary gods of the cities they besieged, Macrob. Saturnal. l. iij. c. 9. Plin. Nat. Hist. l. xxiv. c. xvii. § 102. Plutarch. Crassum, p. 553, A. The Tyrians, when besieged by Alexander, bound the statues of Apollo and Hercules, to prevent them from deserting to the enemy. Quintus Curt. l. iv. c. 3. And the Lacedæmonians, during war, prayed very early in the morning; that, being the first solicitors, they might pre-engage the gods in their favour. Xenophon de Laced. Rep. When Balaam was sent for to curse the Israelites, he had no expectation of success, without the permission of their God. Numb. xxiii. 27. Those who conquered any country adopted the gods of the vanquished people.

† See Shuckford, vol. ii. p. 406.

gods,

gods, not to aggravate and enhance the tremendous effects of Jehovah's displeasure by inflicting like judgments, but to diminish or remove those already inflicted: not to turn more water into blood, for example, but to restore the corrupted waters to their natural state: not to multiply frogs, but to remove or destroy them; especially as it was, at least, equally easy to do the latter as the former. Could the deities of Egypt more effectually expose themselves to the reproaches and indignation of their votaries, than by committing acts of hostility against them, instead of protecting or delivering them from the plagues and vengeance of the adverse Divinity? And were the Egyptians likewise so infatuated, as to desire the divine guardians of their country to join with the God of the Hebrews in bringing down more and heavier judgments, and adding to those direful plagues which he had already inflicted? If Pharaoh and his magicians contrived no better for the relief or protection of their country, we may be certain that Egypt, in their days, was not famed for wisdom.

The real state of the case seems to have been, that Moses having in the name of Jehovah, the God of the universe, who had taken the Hebrews under his peculiar protection, demanded of Pharaoh leave for them to go three days journey into the wilderness, to perform a sacrifice; and having at the request of the king of Egypt *shewn him a miracle* *, by turning his rod into a serpent, in order to authenticate the divinity of his mission; Pharaoh, notwithstanding this

* Exod. vii. 9.

miracle,

miracle, refused to consent to the demand of Moses. It is natural to suppose, that a suspicion that the Israelites were meditating an escape from that wretched slavery in which they were detained, (which might naturally spring up in a mind conscious of its own injustice and oppression,) and the fear of losing so very numerous and valuable a body of slaves, together with all their flocks and herds, would prevent Pharaoh from being forward on this occasion either to receive or follow conviction. We shall the less doubt of this, if we call to mind the pride of princes, (which is not easily reconciled to a diminution of their grandeur,) or the peculiar rigour of the Egyptian policy, and the astonishing magnificence of their public works *. Pharaoh was, as he told Moses, a stranger to Jehovah, in whose name he came: a Deity worshipped only by his Hebrew slaves, whom he had permitted to groan under the most cruel oppressions, and even amongst them very little and but lately known. And his character as the God of the universe, the *only* true God, being subversive of the claims of all the Egyptian deities, would at first appear, to one accustomed to worship a plurality of gods, (many of whom, and particularly the lights of heaven, were thought to exhibit continually the most conspicuous

* The pyramids are a proof of the peculiar turn and genius of the Egyptians to works of magnificence and grandeur; which is also confirmed by the testimony of Diodorus Siculus, l. i. p. 27, ed. Rhodomani. The Israelites were employed in their public buildings, as appears from Exodus, ch. i. and v.; and, no doubt, in many other ways so large a body of people must contribute to the benefit of the state.

proofs

proofs of their divinity,) as the highest absurdity and blasphemy. The Egyptians were early famed for wisdom and learning, and more especially for their knowledge of the nature and worship of the gods: their sentiments on this subject seem to have been received with deference and submission by all the neighbouring nations. At the same time they exceeded them all in zeal for superstition and idolatry. It must therefore be difficult for us to conceive what great offence it gave to their pride and bigotry, to be told that there was no other God but Jehovah, and that the Israelites, at that time the most despicable and wretched part of mankind, were his peculiar people. This was upbraiding *Egypt* with ignorance and impiety, as well as with injustice and cruelty.

Nor is it at all unlikely that Pharaoh might somewhat doubt at first, whether the miracle which had been wrought for his conviction did certainly surpass the powers of nature, and the science of magic, and was a proper proof of the sole divinity of the God of Israel. He had never till then seen an example of this kind; nor indeed had such wonders as those of Moses in Egypt ever been performed before this time: which might occasion some hesitation and surprise. The laws of nature in general, and those in particular concerning the generation of animals, the seasons, circumstances and means of their being produced and brought to life, were not so well understood as at present. And as they conceived of the whole system of nature as animated and divine *,

* See above, ch. iii. sect. ii. at the beginning.

they

they entertained an extravagant opinion of its hidden powers. Learning was in a few hands; and therefore it was not so easy to distinguish what was merely unusual and astonishing, from what was supernatural. A few ages ago our own countryman, friar Roger Bacon, in virtue of his improvements in natural knowledge, passed for a conjurer, without having any design on his part to impose upon the people. The antient magicians *studied* to raise in others the highest possible idea of their profession. And it was the received opinion of antiquity, that divination and prodigies (with the last of which Egypt * abounded more than any other country,) were the effect of the natural influence of the elements and planets; and that magicians who dived into the arcana or secrets of nature, and were masters of their own profession, could regularly bring them to pass, according to the fixed and certain principles of their science. In this science Moses himself had been instructed. And probably the first thought of Pharaoh was, that Moses was nothing more than a magician †.

In this view of things, what was more natural than for Pharaoh to send for his magicians, in order to learn from them, whether the sign given by Moses was truly supernatural, or only such as their art was

* Τερατα τε πλεω σφι ἐυρηται η τοισι αλλοισι ἁπασι ανθρωποισι. Herodot. Euterpe, c. 82.

† Moses had been brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, and was *learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*, Acts vii. 22; and therefore it was natural to account him a magician. On the very same grounds, Daniel and the three children were accounted magicians at Babylon, Dan. i. 4, 20. ch. iv. 7—9. ch. v. 11.

able

able to accomplish? The nature of their attempts corresponded with this view of Pharaoh in calling them to his assistance. For they did not undertake to *out-do* Moses, or to *control* him by *superior* or *opposite* acts of power, but barely to *imitate* him, or to do the same works with his: which they did with a view to invalidate the argument which he drew from his miracles, in support of the sole divinity of Jehovah, and of his own mission. And had the magicians succeeded in their attempt, and in the exercise of their art really performed the same extraordinary acts as Moses did; it would have followed of course, that Moses, whatever he might pretend, was a magician only *, and not an extraordinary divine messenger; and that Jehovah was not the only sovereign of nature †. It is of the last importance, therefore, to attend to the true point in question upon this occasion. The question was not, and could not be, *Are the gods of Egypt superior to the God of Israel?* or, *Can any evil spirits perform greater miracles than those which Moses performed by the assistance of Jehovah?* Every circumstance of the history serves to shew that the question was, *Are the works of Moses proper proofs that the God of Israel is Jehovah, the only sovereign of nature, and consequently that Moses acts by his commission?* or, *Are they merely the won-*

* Pliny (in his Nat. Hist. l. xxx. c. 2.) mentions Moses amongst the most illustrious magicians: which is the highest character under which he could be considered on the common hypothesis.

† See ch. iii. sect. v. p. 212—17. If the magicians had performed real miracles, the consequences would have been the same as if Baal had answered by fire. P. 218.

ders of nature, and the effects of magic ?* To resolve this question, Pharoah sent for his magicians; and they by their magical feats undertook to shew that Moses's works lay within the compass of their art, and therefore could be no proofs of the high claims of the God of Israel, or of Moses's divine commission.

III. But it may be asked, What motives could induce the magicians to make such an attempt, since, notwithstanding Pharaoh might, *they* could not be ignorant of the extent of their own art? When they were first sent for to court, they as well as Pharaoh might conceive of Moses as nothing more than a magician, like themselves. And though it be too weak an authority for such an antient fact; yet it may deserve just to be mentioned, on account of the probability of the thing itself, that, according to the *Talmud*, when Moses began to work his miracles, the magicians bantered him, saying, *Thou bringest straw to Affra* †, (or, as we should express it, *Thou bringest coals to Newcastle*;) meaning that he had judged ill to play his tricks in a country stocked with

* It may be worth observing, that both Philo (de Vita Mosis, l. i. p. 616), and Josephus (Antiq. Jud. l. ii. c. 13) place the subject in the same light.

† The learned authors of the Universal History, though they adopt the common explication of the wonders of the magicians, have taken notice of this Jewish tradition. And they farther observe, that Philo introduces them speaking to Pharaoh and his court to this purpose, *Why are you frightened? We are not ignorant of such things, seeing we profess the same ourselves.* Univers. Hist. vol. iii. 8vo. *p. 373, note E.*

magicians,

magicians, who were as well versed as himself in the powers of nature, and in the knowledge of the secret arts. And it is certain that they must soon discover how reluctant the king was to part with the Israelites, and therefore how acceptable to him it would be, should they by their skill and dexterity be able to imitate, and thereby to discredit, the miracles of Moses. And by a mind prejudiced as his was, they well knew that mere cavils and the most barefaced sophistry are often esteemed a sufficient confutation of the most conclusive arguments. Besides, the king, resolutely determined not to hearken to Moses, might be so unreasonable as to require that of his magicians which was beyond their power*; by which they might be tempted to have recourse to artifice, to screen themselves from his vengeance. And their concern at all times, from motives of pride and ambition†, to raise the reputation of their art to an extravagant height, continually prompted them to have recourse to fallacy to support it. And this extravagance of their pretensions gave some colour to the resentment of princes, when their boasted enterprises failed in the execution. In the case before us, the magicians of Egypt were under every temptation to encounter Moses at all hazards, and if possible to supply by collusion their defect of power. And they

* See Dan. ii. 1—13. The prophets of Baal likewise, 1 Kings xviii. 24, made an experiment, without any well-grounded expectation of success, because the people approved of Elijah's proposal.

† Strabo (Geogr. l. i) tells us, "that the priests of Egypt, the Chaldeans and magi obtained great honour and pre-eminence, because they excelled in all kinds of knowledge."

might

might the more easily hope for success and applause, or at least to avoid disgrace and detection, as they knew the whole court as well as the king would be forward to avail themselves of the appearance not only of equality, but of any resemblance between their performances and those of Moses. From this representation of the motives and aims of the magi, let us now proceed to consider those of Moses.

IV. If we examine the principles and conduct of Moses, we shall soon be sensible that he could not allow the magicians performed real miracles. For,

1. We have already proved that the Scriptures ever represent the whole body of magicians as impostors *, who were incapable of supporting their pretensions by any works or predictions beyond human power and skill.

2. It has been also shewn † that all the sacred writers, and Moses in particular, represent all the Heathen deities (on the belief of whose existence and influence the ‡ magic art was founded) as unsupported by any invisible spirits, and in themselves utterly impotent and senseless; and certainly therefore incapable of imitating the stupendous miracles of Moses.

3. This divine prophet farther taught that the God of Israel was Jehovah, who alone created the world by his power, and ruled it continually by his providence §. His religion was built on the unity and sole dominion of God, as its foundation. And the point which Moses *at this very time* was about to

* Ch. iii. sect. iii. p. 172. † Ch. iii. sect. ii. p. 147—8.
‡ Ch. iii. sect. iii. p. 166. § Ch. iii. sect. v. p. 212.

establish,

establish, was, the sole divinity of Jehovah*, in direct opposition to the principles of idolatry, and consequently with a view of exposing the absolute nullity of all the Heathen gods; the claims of the former being subversive of those of the latter. If Moses therefore allowed that the Heathen idols (or, which we have shewn to be the same thing, any evil spirits† supporting their cause) enabled the magicians *to turn rods into serpents, and water into blood,* and *to create frogs*‡, and consequently any other species of animals, which require only equal skill and power; he contradicts the great design of his mission, and overturns the whole fabric of his religion. For, on the supposition here made, the Heathen deities are not mere nullities, and Jehovah is not God alone. Whatever beings are able to create several different species of animals, and to multiply them at pleasure, (and hereby to destroy the wise œconomy of the animal world,) and to change the inmost nature both of inanimate substances and of living beings; whether we will allow such beings the *name* of God or not, they certainly possess in a very high degree those *powers*, which, according to the united testimony of reason and revelation, are the appropriate and distinguishing glories of the one true God. If the bringing things into existence be no test of a

* Ch. iii. sect v. p. 216—19. † Ch. iii. sect. ii. p. 152—3.

‡ I might have added, that the advocates of the common hypothesis (in effect) allow that those invisible beings who supported the magicians had a power of *turning dust into lice*, when they ascribe their not doing it to their being *restrained* by God.

divine

divine interposition, to what more authentic test can we appeal? The creation of beings endued with *life* does more especially seem to be a branch of the divine prerogative*; the lowest degrees of animal life having an excellence and dignity superior to all the glories of inanimate nature†. Such a creating power, and such a sovereignty over nature, as the Heathen deities are here supposed to have displayed, must make it difficult, if not impossible, to determine what parts of the creation, and what events of providence, are to be ascribed to God alone. Who can tell how far the power of evil spirits may extend on other occasions, when uncontrolled by God, if they were capable even of opposing and contravening, in such an astonishing degree, his operations and designs, at the very time he was publicly asserting his own peculiar honours‡?

4. Moses

* A creating power is represented in Scripture as a divine prerogative, Is xliv. 24. and as the foundation of the worship which God claims from mankind, Jerem. v. 22. *His glory he will not give to another*, Is xlii. 8 ch. xlviii. 11.

† What bishop Sherlock affirms concerning the miracles of Moses (vol. i. p. 283,) would be true also of the works of the magicians, had they been, as he supposes, real miracles: *They were so near akin to the works of creation, that by a just comparison they might be known to come from the same author.* Or rather, since works of creation were performed by opposite invisible powers, it would follow of course that there was a plurality of creators, and therefore of rival gods. See above, ch. ii. sect. iv. Were the common account of the magicians true, their works must necessarily have been considered by Pharaoh as a full demonstration of the existence and power of his own gods, and as a fuller vindication of their worship (at least of a subordinate worship) than the Pagan priesthood ever produced.

‡ *It is* the more incredible that God should now suffer any evil spirit

4. Moses appropriates all miracles to God, and urges his own as an absolute and authentic proof, both of the sole divinity of Jehovah, and of his own mission*: which he could not justly do, if his opposers performed miracles, and even the very same with his. But here it is alleged, notwithstanding we should admit that the magicians wrought real miracles, yet that in the issue it appeared Moses was supported by the true God, because he performed more and greater miracles than his opposers. *The miracles performed by the magicians in Egypt* (says an able and eloquent writer†) *were so far from lessening the authority of the works done by Moses, that they added to it: For, the greater the powers were which God humbled and subdued, the greater evidence did he give of his own superiority.* Many other learned writers have likewise pleaded that the miracles opposed by the idolatrous magicians to those of Moses, the prophet of God, served only to set off the divine power to the greatest advantage. But I cannot persuade myself that the power of God appears to any, much less to the best, advantage, but when it performs works peculiar to itself, such as no creatures are able to imitate, and carries the divine designs into execution without any control. The *superiority* however of the

spirit to work miracles in opposition to himself, as this was the *first time* of interposing in a miraculous manner for the conviction of the world, and no such miracles were performed in any subsequent contest between him and idol gods 1 Kings xviii.

* See the passages cited above, ch. iii. sect. v. p. 219. sect. vi. p. 220 and below, p. 284 — 285.

† Bishop Sherlock, in his Discourses, vol. i. p. 285.

true

true God to the Heathen deities was not the in question. What Moses proposed to prove, that Jehovah was God alone, and that there was besides him, and consequently that the Heathen were mere nullities. Now if in their names great miracles were performed by the magicians still greater by Moses in the name of Jehovah; th we may allow that hereby Jehovah proved hi superior* to the Heathen gods; yet this super to them will not prove that he is God alone, an the Heathen gods were nullities, destitute of tha power which they visibly exerted. *The great powers were which God humbled and subdued,* w much the less truth could they be represented a potent and senseless idols. Had Moses, while lowed to the gods of Egypt a creating power (or seems very nearly to approach it), attempted nc more than to prove the superiority of the G Israel; this would rather have established than turned the Pagan system, which was built upon lief of gods of different orders, who possessed v degrees of excellence and power.

But a case so very absurd, as that of two op parties working miracles for victory, would have been put, had the defenders of revelation

* It was shewn above, ch. ii. sect. vi. p. 81, that in the such a contest as is here supposed, between two opposite working miracles for victory; though he who exerts *gr* power than his opponent may be allowed to possess *greater* power, yet it will not follow from hence that he is assisted *divine* power.

carefully attended to the state of the controversy* between the prophets of God and the antient idolaters. And were it true in general, that, in case of a contest between two parties performing real miracles, he who does the most and greatest is sent of God; yet this would be of no service to the cause of Moses, because he places the truth of his mission on a different footing. Moses certainly best understood the evidence arising from his own miracles; and it is impossible to make a just vindication of them, unless we vindicate the use to which *he* applies them. Now Moses never alleges in his own favour, that on the whole he performed more and greater miracles than his opposers†. He urges his miracles in an absolute, not in a comparative, view, as full proofs of his mission from Jehovah; which he could not justly have done, at least with regard to those miracles which were performed both by him and his rivals, had there been any such. This will more fully appear under the next head, where we shall shew that,

5. Moses not only urges his miracles in general, but even each individual miracle apart, as a complete proof both of the divinity of Jehovah and his own mission. With regard to his first miracle, the transformation of his rod into a serpent, he was directed

* Ch. iii. sect. v. p. 222.

† Nor do any of the prophets of God ever plead the *superiority* of their miracles, either in respect of number or excellence, to those of their opposers; necessary as such a plea would have been, in case their opposers had performed real miracles. These divine messengers appeal to their works, as being in themselves, and separately considered, signs of a divine mission.

by God to perform and propose it both to the Israelites and Egyptians as *a sign**, surely not as a doubtful and fallacious, but as a certain and demonstrative, sign of his mission from Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews; without taking into consideration any supposed superiority he was afterwards to acquire. Yet how was the transformation of his rod a demonstration of his being sent by Jehovah, if the magicians produced the very same credentials to shew the falsehood of his commission? Nay, the magicians, in the first contest, if they performed real miracles, not only imitated but exceeded Moses; having the advantage over him in the *number* of their miracles. For they turned not only one rod into a serpent, which was all Moses had hitherto done, but they turned their several rods into serpents. Now why is Moses to be credited on account of a single miracle, if it be contradicted and overborne by several miracles fully equal to it? Besides, with respect to the Israelites, they had not only been instructed to receive, but had actually received, Moses as a messenger from Jehovah, the God of their fathers†, upon the evidence of the miraculous conversion of his rod into a serpent. What doubts then, nay, what shame on account of their own credulity, and what indignation against Moses, must they have felt, when they saw this evidence overturned and destroyed, which Moses had proposed, and they had admitted, as valid in itself, without the aid of any farther miracle! Afterwards,

* Exod. iv. 1—5. ch. vii. 8, 9.

† Exod. iv. 1—5.

it

it is true, Moses's serpent swallowed up those of the magicians: but this after-victory, however splendid, could not retrieve the credit of the former defeat; it could not establish the validity of the proof, from the change of his rod, which he had appealed to in the beginning as a decisive testimony in his favour; but which was entirely destroyed by the magicians changing their rods into serpents. In like manner concerning the first miraculous plague; Moses was commanded to say to Pharaoh, in the name of God, *IN THIS thou shalt know that I am Jehovah: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand, upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned into blood**. Now, if the magicians afterwards performed the very same† kind of miracle, it was

* Exod. vii. 17. See above p. 220, note ‡, where other examples are produced, to shew what use Moses makes of each individual miracle.

† I allow indeed, that, on the common hypothesis, the miracles of turning water into blood, and bringing up frogs, as performed by the magicians, were not so *extensive* as the same miracles when performed by Moses. But on that hypothesis the reason might be, that when the magicians undertook these miracles, it was impossible to carry them to the same extent; the waters of Egypt being previously converted into blood, and the country covered with frogs, by Moses. And to this cause, rather than to any defect of power in the magicians, the Egyptians would naturally ascribe the difference between their works and those of Moses, if the former had been real miracles. In case you allow the magicians a miraculous power of turning water into blood, how will you shew that they did not exert it as far as the scarcity of water would permit, and therefore as far as it could have been exerted by Moses himself had he been in their situation? Why then should it be taken for granted,

was no more a proof that the God of the Hebrews was Jehovah, than that one of the Egyptian idols was Jehovah. With what truth then could it be affirmed to Pharaoh, "By *this* miracle the distinguishing cha-

granted, by the advocates of the common hypothesis, that, when the magicians had (it is supposed) turned a certain quantity of water into blood, their power was limited to that particular quantity, and could extend no farther; inasmuch as the history contains an obvious reason for their not turning more water into blood, there being very little water on which the experiment could be made? When Christ converted into wine the water in six vessels, did he not hereby give proof of a power which could have produced the same change in a much larger quantity? The limits of the miracle were determined by the occasion and circumstances of it, and do not create the least presumption of any defect of power. I add, that if this miracle of Christ was in itself a proof of a divine interposition, why do men deny the divinity of the similar miracle which they ascribe to the magicians? From the mere nature of the work itself, no argument can be drawn to its disadvantage. It was indeed less extensive than the corresponding miracle of Moses; but we have accounted for this difference. Besides, in miracles of the same kind, can the abettors of the common hypothesis determine, on their own principles, how far the power of the devil reaches, and where the power of God begins? Were we to allow them, that, whenever one miracle exceeds another in extent, the most extensive miracle must necessarily proceed from a being of the most extensive power; this would not prove its divinity, as was shewn above, ch. ii. sect vi. Nor did Moses ever rest his mission on his miracles being more extensive than the supposed miracles of the magicians. Nay, God himself says to Moses, Exod. iv 9, *If they will not believe even these two signs*, (the turning the rod of Moses into a serpent, and the serpent into a rod again, and the making his hand leprous and sound,) *thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land, and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.* Here the quantity of water could not be considerable: nevertheless, the conversion of it into blood is proposed as a certain sign of Moses's divine mission.

racter

racter of the true God shall be fully made known and displayed?" Had Moses on this occasion referred the king for conviction to his subsequent miracles; this new evidence, however forcible, could not have rescued him from the just reproach of having before offered (and by a pretended command of God) such as was futile and fallacious, and of still claiming a title to a divine legation, which, on the issue he had put it, had been already decided against him. Though we should allow Moses but the common discretion of a man, and deny him the divine guidance of a prophet of God, we cannot suppose him guilty of so weak a conduct as this; which must have sunk the Israelites into despondency, afforded the Egyptians just occasion of triumph, and fully vindicated Pharaoh in treating Moses as an impostor, who had offered false tests of a divine agency and mission. Our learned divines would never have supposed that Moses believed the magicians performed real miracles, and the same with his own, had they considered the use which this divine prophet makes of each distinct and particular miracle which he performed.

6. The absurdity of supposing that Moses allows the magicians the credit of real miracles will appear in a still stronger light, if we recollect *the order of time* in which their supposed miracles and those of Moses were performed. Dr. Clarke*, after most other writers, seems to have inverted the true order of time when he places the miracles of the magicians first: *The magicians worked several miracles to prove*

* Vol. ii. p. 700, folio.

Moses

Moses an impostor, and not sent of God: Moses, to prove his divine commission, worked miracles more and greater than theirs. But according to the history, Moses first of all turns his rod into a serpent; and thereby, according to his own and our representation, fully establishes his divine mission. Immediately after, his opposers destroy the force of that evidence to which he had appealed, by producing (according to the common hypothesis) the very same evidence, and in a more perfect degree, to prove him an impostor. In the next place, Jehovah interposes to recover the lost credit of his messenger, and the serpent of Moses swallows up those of the magicians. But the spectators might justly doubt whether one serpent's eating another was a greater miracle than the turning several rods into so many serpents; and therefore must remain in suspense on which side the superiority lay. However that might be, Jehovah a third time engages to evince his own divinity, and the authority of his ambassador, by turning the waters of Nile into blood. But now the evil spirit (according to the commonly-received account of this matter) interposes in his turn, and, by rivalling the operations of Jehovah, defeats his intention, and exposes the insufficiency of the means used to accomplish it; and hereby gains a temporary triumph over the professed sovereign of the universe. God interposes again, and with the same view as before, and brings frogs upon the land of Egypt. But his intentions are again frustrated by Satan, who performed the same achievement, to convince the world that that work had been falsely arrogated

rogated by God as his sole prerogative. Thus (according to the prevailing hypothesis) were the claims of Jehovah and Moses on the one hand, and of the magicians and the devil on the other, alternately established and destroyed; the superiority of power appearing on both sides at different times: nay, hitherto more frequently, and indeed more incontestably, belonging to the devil than to God; inasmuch as it was not Jehovah who controlled the supposed miracles of the devil, (one instance alone excepted,) but the devil who controlled the miracles of Jehovah. The abettors of the common hypothesis are concerned to shew that their account of this contest, if traced into its genuine consequences, is not big with impiety, and the most dishonourable apprehensions of the blessed God. Can they deliberately persuade themselves, that the almighty sovereign of nature would engage in an open contest for supremacy with the devil? and that he would suffer him to appear on some occasions as his rival, and even as his superior, capable of frustrating his great designs, invalidating the proofs he thought fit to give of his universal dominion, and hereby rendering him contemptible in the eyes of the Israelites and Egyptians? Or, could his claim to be Jehovah, and the only sovereign of nature, be both true and false? For these reasons, (and several others which will occur in the sequel,) Moses could not represent the magicians as performing real miracles.

V. Here perhaps it may be objected, that Moses describes the works of the magicians in the very same language

language as he does his own*; and therefore that there is reason to conclude that they were equally miraculous. To which I answer,

1. That nothing is more common than to speak of professed jugglers as *doing* what they *pretend* and *appear* to do†; and that this language never misleads us, when we reflect what sort of men are spoken of, namely, mere imposers on the sight. Why might not Moses then use the common popular language, when speaking of the magicians, without any danger of misconstruction; inasmuch as the subject he was treating, all the circumstances of the narrative, and the opinion which the historian was known to entertain of the inefficacy and imposture of magic, did all concur to prevent mistakes?

2. Moses does not affirm that there was a perfect conformity between his works and those of the magicians. He does not close the respective relations of his own particular miracles with saying, The magi-

* *The magicians of Egypt also did in like manner with their inchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents.* Exod. vii. 11, 12. After Aaron had turned all the waters of Egypt into blood, it is said, *The magicians did so with their inchantments*, ver. 22. And again it is said, *The magicians did so with their inchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.* Ch. viii. 7.

† When Moses describes what the magicians pretended and seemed to perform by saying, *They cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents, and they brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt*; he only uses the same language as Apuleius, (Metam. l. i.) when describing a person who merely played juggling tricks, Circulatorem aspexi equestrem spatham præacutam mucrone infesto devorasse: ac mox eundem,—venatoriam lanceam,—in ima viscera condidisse.

4 cians

clans did *that thing**, or, *According to what he did, so did they*†; (a form of speech used on this occasion, no less than three times in one chapter, to describe the exact correspondence between the orders of God and the behaviour of his servants:) but makes choice of a word of great latitude, such as does not necessarily express any thing more than a general similitude, such as is consistent with a difference in many important respects: They did *so*‡, or *in like manner*, as he had done. That a perfect imitation of Moses could not be designed by this word, is evident from its being applied to cases in which such an imitation was absolutely impracticable: for when Aaron had converted all the waters of Egypt into blood§, we are told, *the magicians did so*, that is, something *in like sort*. Nor can it be supposed that they covered the land of Egypt with frogs; as will be shewn below. Nay, the word imports nothing more than their *attempting* some imitation of Moses; for it is used when they failed in their attempt. *They did SO—— to bring forth lice, but they could not*‖.

3. So far is Moses from ascribing the tricks of the magicians to the invocation and power of dæmons, or to any superior beings whatever, that he does most expressly refer all they did or attempted in imitation

* As in Exod. ix. 5, 6. † Ch. vii. 6, 10, 20.

‡ כן. § Exod. vii. 20—25.

‖ Ch. viii. 18. Le Clerc observes, Nec raro Hebræi, ad conatum notandum, verbis utuntur quæ rem effectam significant, Gen. xxxvii. 21. Consult him likewise on Exod. viii. 18. ch. xii. 43. Ps. lxvi. 2.

of himself, *to human artifice and imposture.* The original words which are translated *inchantments**, are entirely different from that rendered inchantments in other passages of Scripture, and do not carry in them any sort of reference to sorcery, or magic, or the interposition of any spiritual agents. They import deception and concealment, and ought to have been rendered, *secret sleights* or *jugglings;* and are thus translated even by those who adopt the common hypothesis with regard to the magicians†. These *secret sleights and jugglings* are expressly referred to the magicians, not to the devil, who is not so much as mentioned in the history. Should we therefore be asked‡, How it came to pass, in case

* The original word used Exod. vii. 11, is בלהטיהם belahatehem; and that which occurs ch. vii. 22. and ch. viii. 7, 18, is בלטיהם belatehem. The former is probably derived from להט lahat, which signifies *to burn,* and the substantive *a flame,* or *shining sword-blade;* and is applied to *the flaming sword* which guarded the tree of life, Gen. iii. 24. Those who formerly used legerdemain dazzled and deceived the sight of the spectators by the art of brandishing their swords, and sometimes seemed *to eat them,* and *to thrust them into their bodies.* And the expression seems to intimate, that the magicians appearing to turn their rods into serpents, was owing to their eluding the eyes of the spectators by a dexterous management of their swords. In the succeeding instances, they made use of some different contrivance: for the latter word belatehem comes from לאט or לוט, *to cover* or *hide* (which some think the former word also does;) and therefore fitly expresses any secret artifices or methods of deception, whereby false appearances are imposed upon the spectators.

† Bishop Kidder on Exod. vii. 11.

‡ As we are by Dr. Macknight, in his Truth of the Gospel History, p. 372.

the

the works of the magicians were performed by sleight of hand, that Moses has given no *hint* thereof? we answer, He has not contented himself with a hint of this kind; but, at the same time that he ascribes his own miracles to Jehovah, has in the most *direct terms* resolved every thing done in imitation of them entirely to the fraudulent contrivances of his opposers, to legerdemain or sleight of hand, in contradistinction from magical incantations. Moses therefore could not design to represent their works as real miracles, at the very time he was branding them as impostures.

VI. It remains only to shew, that the works performed by the magicians did not exceed the cause to which they are ascribed; or, in other words, the magicians proceeded no farther in imitation of Moses than *human artifice* might enable them to go; (while the miracles of Moses were not liable to the same impeachment, and bore upon themselves the plainest signatures of that divine power to which they are referred.) If this can be proved, the interposition of the devil on this occasion will appear to be an hypothesis invented without any kind of necessity, as it certainly is without any authority from the sacred text.

1. With regard to the first attempt of the magicians, the turning rods into serpents; it cannot be accounted extraordinary that they should seem to succeed in it, when we consider that these men were famous for the art of dazzling and deceiving the sight; and that serpents, being first rendered tractable

table and harmless *, as they easily may, have had a thousand different tricks played with them, to the astonishment of the spectators. Huetius † tells us that amongst the Chinese there are jugglers who undertake to turn rods into serpents; though, no doubt, they only dexterously substitute the latter in the room of the former. Now this is the very trick the magicians played: and it appears by facts, that the thing in general is very practicable. It is immaterial to account particularly how the thing was done, since it is not always easy to explain in what manner a common juggler imposes upon our sight. Should it be suggested, that Moses might impose upon the sight of the spectators as well as the magicians; I answer, that as he ascribes their performances to legerdemain, and his own to God; so there might and must have been a wide difference in their manner of acting: the *covered arts* of the magicians not being used by Moses, the same suspicion could not rest on

* Those who desire to see instances of this from modern authors may consult Dr. Sykes on Miracles, p. 166—168. Many pretended to render serpents harmless by charms, (Ps. lviii. 5. Bochart. Hieroz. part. post. l. iii. c. 6. Shaw's Travels, preface, p. 5. Travels, p. 429. Supplement, p. 62.) though more probably they destroyed the teeth through which they ejected their poison. Herodotus mentions certain serpents which were quite harmless, ἀνθρώπων οὐδαμὰ δηλήμονες, Euterpe, c. 74. Antiquity attributed to the Psylli, a people of Africa, the extraordinary virtue of rendering themselves invulnerable by serpents, as well as of curing those who were bitten by them. See Dr. Hasselquist's Voyages and Travels, cited in the Monthly Review for February 1766, p. 133.

† Alnetan. Quæst. l. ii. p. 155.

him as did on them. What an ingenious writer asserts is not true, that according to the book of Exodus, the outward appearance on both sides was precisely the same: for the book of Exodus specifies a most important difference between the miracle of Aaron and the impostures of the magicians. For it says, that *Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.* But with regard to the magicians it uses very different language; for at the same time it says, *They cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents,* it expressly declares that they did this by their *inchantments,* or *covered arts.* And what in the most effectual manner prevented any apprehension that the serpent of Aaron was (like those of the magicians) the effect only of a dexterous management, not a miraculous production; God caused his rod to swallow up theirs: in which there was no room for artifice, and which for this reason the magicians did not attempt to imitate. This new miracle was not designed to establish the superiority of the God of Israel to the idols of Egypt; nor was it capable of answering that end *; but, in the view here given of it, had much wisdom, by vindicating the credit of the former miracle †, (which

* It was observed above, p. 286, that it is far from being evident, that the causing one serpent to swallow several is a greater miracle than the actual creation of a number equal to those swallowed.

† We learn from hence, how little occasion there was for Moses to detect the artifices of the magicians; who did not so much as pretend to any peculiar divine assistance, and who sunk into contempt of themselves, 2 Tim. iii. 9. The nature of the works of Moses,

(which might possibly be more open to suspicion than any of the rest,) as well as by affording new evidence of a divine interposition in favour of Moses. God considered this evidence as fully decisive of the point in question between his messengers and the magicians: for from this time he proceeded to the *punishment* of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; which affords a new demonstration, drawn from the justice of the divine Being, of the falsehood of the common hypothesis, according to the representation given of it by those who maintain that the magicians were not plainly vanquished till they were restrained from turning the dust into lice *. Had this been the case, it

Moses, and the open unsuspicious manner of their performance, served sufficiently to disgrace the attempts of his rivals.—On the other hand, it is an insuperable difficulty attending the common hypothesis, that Moses never intimated to Pharaoh, or the Egyptians, that the magicians performed their works by the assistance of the devil, (as without doubt he would have done, if that had been the case;) nor taught them to distinguish between *diabolical* and *divine* miracles; though on the common hypothesis both appeared in several instances to be the very same. If the devil performed real miracles in support of the magicians, it was the more necessary that Moses should have given express notice of this, both to the Israelites and Egyptians; as the latter certainly had no suspicion of this kind, and neither could learn any thing concerning the miraculous power of the devil, but by revelation. Moses, however, instead of revealing this secret, has, (by describing his rivals as magicians, and their works as impostures,) in effect, denied their being assisted by the devil.

* According to Mr. Hallet, (on Miracles, p. 26, 34, 35.) the works of the magicians were *real miracles*, such as argued the interposition of *opposite* invisible powers to those by which Moses was assisted: the three first miracles of Moses did not appear to require more

it would have been right in Pharaoh to suspend his judgment till that time; nor would God have punished him by the two intervening plagues, that of turning the waters of the Nile (to which Egypt owed its fecundity) into blood, and covering the land with frogs: punishments so severe as to imply the most criminal obstinacy on the part of Pharaoh.

2. With regard to the next attempt of the magicians to imitate Moses, who had already turned all the running and standing waters of Egypt into blood*, there is no difficulty in accounting for their success, in the degree in which they succeeded. For it was during the continuance of this judgment, when no water could be procured but *by digging round about the river*†, that the magicians attempted by some proper preparation to change the colour of the small quantity that was brought them; (probably endeavouring to persuade Pharaoh, that they could as easily have turned a larger quantity into blood.) In

more strength for their performance than those of the magicians; and the spectators were in suspense which side gained the victory, till the magicians were prevented from turning the dust of the land into lice. Archbishop Tillotson also, (on 1 John iv. 1. vol. i. p. 179, fol. ed.) after a thousand other writers of inferior note, supposes the evidence till then to be equal on both sides. But is it possible that the righteous Judge of the world should punish Pharaoh for not complying with his orders, before he had given him clear evidence that those orders came from him, and while he could not but doubt whether they did come from him; if the being left in doubt about it did not itself create a suspicion, that they could not come from him?

* Exod. vii. 20—25. † Ver. 24.

a case

a case of this nature, imposture might, and, as we learn from history, often did, take place. It is related by Valerius Maximus *, that the wine poured into the cup of Xerxes was three times changed into blood. But such trifling feats as these could not at all disparage the miracle of Moses; *the vast extent* of which raised it above the suspicion of fraud, and stamped upon every heart, that was not steeled against all conviction, the strongest impression of its divinity. For he turned their streams, rivers, ponds, and the water in all their receptacles, into blood. And the fish that was in the river (Nile) died, and the river stank †.

3. Pharaoh not yielding to this evidence, God proceeded to farther punishments, and covered the whole land of Egypt with frogs. Before these frogs were removed ‡, the magicians undertook to bring (into some place cleared for the purpose) a fresh supply: which they might easily do, when there was such plenty every where at hand. Here also the narrow compass of the work exposed it to the suspicion of being effected by human art; to which the miracle of Moses was not liable; the infinite number of frogs which filled the whole kingdom of Egypt (so that their ovens, beds, and tables swarmed with them) being a proof of their immediate miraculous produc-

* L. i. c. 6. † Exod. viii. 1—7.

‡ Exod. viii. 6, 7, 8. Nor indeed can it be imagined, after this or the former plague had been removed, that Pharaoh would order his magicians to renew either.

tion.

tion. Besides, the magicians were unable to procure their *removal**, which was accomplished by Moses, at the submissive application of Pharaoh, and at the very time that Pharaoh himself chose; the more clearly to convince him that God was the author of these miraculous judgments, and that their infliction or removal did not depend upon the influence of the elements or stars, at set times or in critical junctures.

4. The history of the last attempt of the magicians confirms the account here given of all their former ones. Moses turned all the dust of the land into lice: and this plague, like the two preceding ones, being inflicted at the word of Moses, and extended over the whole kingdom of Egypt, must necessarily have been owing, not to human art, but to a divine power. Nevertheless, the motives upon which the magicians at first engaged in the contest with Moses, the shame of desisting, and some slight appearances of success in their former attempts, prompted them still to carry on the imposture, and to try *with their inchantments to bring forth lice: but they could not* †. With all their skill in magic, and with all their dexterity in deceiving the spectators, they could not even succeed so far as they had done in former instances, by producing a specious counterfeit of this work of Moses. Had they hitherto performed real miracles, by the assistance of the devil; how came they to desist now? It cannot be a greater miracle to pro-

* Ch. viii. 8. Had they been able to *inflict* this plague *miraculously*, they might have *removed* it in the same manner.

† Exod. viii. 18.

duce lice, than to turn rods into serpents, water into blood, and to create frogs. It has indeed been very often said, that the devil was now laid under *a restraint:* but hitherto no proof of this assertion has been produced. The Scripture is silent, both as to the devil's being now restrained from interposing any farther in favour of the magicians, and as to his having afforded them his assistance on the former occasions. But, if we agree with Moses in ascribing to the magicians nothing more than the artifice and dexterity which belonged to their profession, we shall find that their want of success in their last attempt was owing to the different nature and circumstances of their enterprise. In all the former instances, the magicians knew beforehand what they were to undertake, and had time for preparation. They were not sent for by Pharaoh, till after Moses had turned his rod into a serpent: and previous notice had been publicly given of the two first plagues *. But the orders in relation to the third were no sooner issued than executed, without being previously imparted to Pharaoh †. So that, in this last case, they had no time for contriving any expedient for imitating or impeaching the act of Moses. And had they been allowed time, how was it possible for them to make it appear that they produced those animals, by which they themselves and all the country were already covered ‡ and surrounded? Or, what artifice could

* Exod. vii. 15, 17. ch. viii. 1—4. † Ch. viii. 16.

‡ Ver. 18. There *being lice upon man, and upon beast,* seems to be *assigned* as a reason of the magicians being unable to counterfeit *this miracle.*

escape

escape detection, in relation to insects, whose minuteness hinders them from being perceived till they are brought so near as to be subject to the closest inspection? Now therefore the magicians chose to say, *This* (last work of Moses) *is the finger of God**.

It has been generally thought, that the magicians here acknowledge "that the God of Israel was stronger than the gods of Egypt, who had hitherto assisted† them, but were now restrained from doing it by his superior power." But the text makes no mention of their allowing the God of Israel to be superior to the gods of Egypt; much less of their admitting the former to be Jehovah, and the only true God. Nor do they refer to any supernatural restraint upon the Egyptian deities, but to the last miracle‡ of Moses, when they say, *This is the finger of God;* or *of a god,* for the original word§ admits this sense, and very probably was used in no other by the magicians, who believed in a plurality of gods. Being unable to turn the dust of the earth into lice, (and even to

* Ver. 19.

† Had the magicians in the former trials been assisted by the gods of Egypt, (or any evil spirits who supported their cause,) they might have imputed their miscarriage in the trial under consideration, to the omission of some ceremony or incantation judged necessary to engage their assistance. The disappointments of the Pagan diviners were frequently accounted for in this manner, and their credit hereby saved. Nor was it difficult for idolaters to account for a disparity of power between different gods; each god having his peculiar province, as was shewn above, p. 211.

‡ The Targum of Onkelos renders the words, *This plague comes from God.* And the Arabic version expresses the same sense, *A sign of this nature is of God.* § Elohim.

seem

seem to do it,) they allow that this surpassed the science they professed, and argued the special miraculous interposition of some deity. There is no sort of evidence, that this language of the magicians proceeded from a desire of doing justice to the character and claims of the God of Israel, or that it was not merely designed as the best apology they were able to make for their own failure of success, and to prevent Pharaoh from reproaching them with the want of skill in their profession. Certain it is, that this declaration of the magicians had no good effect upon Pharaoh, but seems rather to be mentioned as an occasion of his continued hardness *. Nay, the history plainly intimates, that the magicians themselves afterwards confronted Moses, till, in punishment of their obstinacy, they were smitten with ulcers †. I add, that the sense here assigned to their language is perfectly agreeable to the account before given of the state of the controversy between them and Moses: for it implies, that the magicians had not so much as

* Ver. 19. After relating what the magicians said to Pharaoh, the historian adds, *And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them*, that is, to Moses and Aaron, (as clearly appears from the use of the same form of speech, Exod. vii. 13, 22.) *as the Lord had said.* Its having been taken for granted, that Pharaoh is here reproved for not hearkening to his magicians, (who never persuaded their monarch to release the Israelites,) seems to have prevented critics from understanding the true meaning of the passage in question, *This is the finger of God.*

† *The magicians could not stand before Moses, because of the boil: for the boil was upon the magicians.* Exod. ix. 11. Does not this imply, that till this time the magicians had, in some method or other, opposed or disparaged Moses?

pretended

pretended to any miraculous interposition of the gods in their favour, but relied entirely upon the established rules of their art; and consequently that Pharaoh's view in sending for them was to enable himself to determine, whether the works of Moses lay within the compass of it.

I cannot conclude this subject without observing, that the strenuous but unsuccessful opposition of the magicians to Moses added strength to his cause; as it served to manifest the divinity of his miracles, by clearing him from all suspicion of magic. This art was thought equal to the most wonderful phænomena. In Egypt it was held in the highest esteem, and carried to its utmost perfection. Pharaoh, without doubt, on the present most important and interesting occasion, engaged the assistance of the most able professors of it, who, from a regard to their own reputation and interest, would try every possible method to invalidate the miracles of Moses. Nevertheless, their utmost efforts were baffled; and the vanity and futility of the claims of magic were detected and exposed: agreeably to the censure passed upon them by St. Paul. For, speaking of certain persons whose opposition to genuine Christianity was the sole effect of their corrupt minds, without the least colour of reason; he compares them to Jannes and Jambres * who withstood Moses; and did it, he must

* Jannes and Jambres, mentioned by St. Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 8, from the Chaldee paraphrase on Exod. vii. 11, are supposed to have been the two chiefs of Pharaoh's magicians. Numenius, the Pythagorean philosopher,

must mean, with as little pretence; or there would be no justice in the comparison. He adds, *Their folly was manifest unto all men* *; and thus he taxes the conduct of the magicians with the most glaring absurdity. He cannot therefore be supposed to admit that they imitated and equalled for a time the miracles of Moses, and then desisted as soon as they found themselves unable to continue the contest to advantage, (which would have been a point of prudence;) but to assert, that they wickedly and absurdly attempted to place the feats of art on a level with the undeniable operations of a divine power; and so shamefully miscarrying in their undertaking, they exposed themselves to the contempt of those who had once held them in high veneration. We proceed to consider,

SECTION II,

The Case of Samuel's Appearance to Saul at Endor, 1 Sam. xxviii.

I. AMONGST other detestable methods of divination practised by the antient Pagans, one was their pretension of calling up and consulting the dead †. The soul

philosopher, (apud Euseb. Præp. Ev. l. ix. c. 8.) says, *they were inferior to none in magic skill; and for that reason chosen by common consent to oppose Musæus,* (for so the Heathens called Moses.) See Le Clerc on Exod. vii. 12. and Pliny's Hist. l. xxx. c. 1.

* 2 Tim. iii. 9.

† *This* custom is referred to Is. viii. 19. ch. xxix. 4. ch. lxv. 3. *A full account* of it may be found in Lucan. l. vi. ver. 591, &c. Virgil. En.

soul of man, when separated from the body, was supposed to be clothed with a material covering*, which retained the shape and lineaments of the body, and was capable of being seen and heard, though of too fine a contexture to be felt or handled. This *image* † or *shadow* was what the Heathens conceived they could raise by proper sacrifices to the earth, to the dead, and to the infernal deities ‡. *Human victims* § were frequently offered up on these occasions. At a time when the pretended art of raising up ghosts was held in high esteem || in the Pagan world, and temples were erected where the ceremony of conjura-

Æn. l. vi. Homer. Il. l. xxiii. Odyss. l. x. xi. Statius's Thebaid, iv. ver. 477. In Horace (epod. od. ult.) Canidia boasts, Possim crematos excitare mortuos; and Medea in Ovid (Metam. l. vii. ver. 199, &c.) that she could command manes exire sepulchris. See likewise Herodotus, l. v. c. 29. Heliodor. Æthiop. l. vi. p. 293. Joseph. Antiq. l. vi. c. xiv. § 2. Horace, Satir. l. i. sat. viii. ver. 28, 29. And Tibullus, lib. i. el. ii. ver. 45, 46. where the pretensions of sorceresses are thus described,

Hæc cantu finditque solum, manesque sepulchris
Elicit, et tepido devocat ossa rogo.

* Cic. Tusc. Disput. i. 16.

† The Greeks called it εἴδωλον: the Latins, simulachrum, imago, umbra.

‡ Homer. Odyss. A. 21, &c. Æschyl. Pers.

§ Servius on Virgil. Æn. l. vi. lin. 107. and Patrick on Deut. xviii. 11.

|| Lucian. de Astrol. 24. Homer makes Ulysses have recourse to necromancy without any scruple; but in later and more enlightened ages, the magic arts becoming contemptible and odious, Virgil represents Dido as making an apology for using them. Æn. iv. 493.

tion

tion was to be performed *; Moses, with the highest reason, branded it as a most atrocious crime, and punished it with death †. Unhappily, however, this execrable superstition (as indeed almost all the other superstitions of Paganism) was too much countenanced by the earliest Christian converts, and particularly by the antient Fathers, who universally ascribed to magicians and necromancers the power of calling up the souls of the dead ‡. A blind deference to the authority of these writers (whose faith was an unnatural mixture of Pagan and Christian principles, not less opposite to one another than light and darkness,) has too long enslaved the Christian world, and hindered them from duly attending to the voice of reason, or what is taught in the sacred writings. To this neglect we must ascribe their embracing an opinion so repugnant to the order of the natural world, and to the doctrines of revelation respecting the state of the dead. Can it be consistent with a just reverence of God, to believe that he has subjected the souls of the departed to be remanded back from their destined abodes, and compelled to reveal what he has seen fit should be concealed; and this at the call of

* Herodot. l. v. c. xcii. § 7. Pausanias, Bœot. c. 30. Plutarch. Vit. Cimon. p. 482. We read 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. 2 Kings, xxi. 6. that Manasses *dealt with a familiar spirit*; which, according to the LXX, imports his establishing the practice of consulting the dead, and erecting temples for that purpose.

† Deut. xviii. 10, 11. Levit. xx. 27. See above, ch. iii. sect. iii, p. 177.

‡ *Middleton's* Free Inquiry, p. 66.

some

ome of the vilest mortals? Are even the most emi-ient saints and prophets doomed to such dishonour? And could Pagan priests and diviners acquire such an extraordinary power over them, by the practice of he most execrable rites, and offering up the most nhuman sacrifices? Surely natural reason confirms he suffrage of Scripture, when it brands the whole nagic art, to which evocations of the dead and all iecromantic divinations appertain, as founded in im-)osture *.

II. There are some who admit that witches cannot listurb the souls of good men, much less of pro-)hets; who nevertheless are of opinion that these vretched women can cause *the devil to counterfeit he souls of the dead;* and that, in the case before is, *an evil spirit appeared before Saul in the likeness)f Samuel* †. This is not advanced upon the testi-nony of reason or experience, or upon the authority)f divine revelation; but in conformity to the wild ictions of the Platonic philosophers ‡, invented to leceive the credulous, and to confirm their attach-nent to the worship of false gods. Suppose the orcerers and diviners amongst the Heathens had)een able, by offering sacrifices to their infernal dei-ies, and by other rites of necromancy, to cause evil pirits to assume the shape of dead men, and to ap-

* See ch. iii. sect. 3. p. 170.

† See Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 12.

‡ Porph. de Abstinentia, l. ii. thus describes certain fallacious pirits, Γενος απαταλης φυσεως παντομορφον και πολυτροπον, υποκριτομενον αι Θεους, και δαιμονας, και ψυχας τεθνηκοτων. Compare Iamblichus de Myster. sect. iii. c. 31.

pear

pear with their full resemblance before their former acquaintance; would not this deception, especially when accompanied with true predictions, have supported idolatry as effectually, and done as much mischief in the world, as a power of calling up the dead themselves*? Besides, the very apparition of a spiritual and incorporeal being, and the gift of prophecy, are real miracles, and as such cannot take place but by divine appointment; unless all the arguments hitherto offered on this point are inconclusive. Lastly, the historian calls the appearance to Saul, Samuel†; which he could not do with truth, if it was no other than the devil, who here appears, not as a tempter, but as a very severe reprover of impiety and wickedness.

III. Many learned men have maintained that it was neither Samuel nor an evil spirit who now appeared to Saul, but that the whole was the work of human imposture. In support of this opinion it may be pleaded, that the woman to whom Saul applied to call up Samuel, though she is said to have *a familiar spirit*‡, and pretended to be able to call up the dead, and

* See above, ch. iii. sect. ii. p. 155.

† 1Sam. xxviii. 12.

‡ It was observed, ch. iii. sect. iii. p. 174, note ‡, that the Hebrew word *ob*, and the plural *oboth*, is generally rendered by the LXX εγγαστριμυθες, ventriloquists. In Is. xix. 3, it is rendered by them τους εκ της γης φωνουντας, *those that speak out of the earth*. I allow that this art requires no evil spirit, nor had the woman whom Saul consulted the assistance of any. Nevertheless, as these ventriloquists pretended to be, and were thought to be, inspired by those who applied to them to call up the dead, our translators had some ground for

and by their help to foretell future events, was merely a ventriloquist, one of those who had the art of speaking with their mouths shut, so as to seem to speak out of their bellies, and who could throw their voices as if they came out of the earth, or from other places: an art which must necessarily have been very serviceable to those who counterfeited the answers of the dead. With regard to Saul, how easy must it have been to impose upon a man whose reason had been so long disturbed by jealousy, and who was now sunk into despair by the invasion of his enemies, and a sense of his rejection by God? If he had been mas-

for rendering the word *ob, a familiar spirit.* Somewhat of this import the word must have in the mouth of Saul, when he said, *Seek me a woman that is mistress of ob, Divine to me by ob,* (1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 8.) and denote either *a spirit of divination* in general, or *a spirit by which* (it was believed) *she could call up the dead.* Saul must suppose she was agitated and swelled by some spirit. See Le Clerc on Levit. xix. 31. It appears from Plutarch, (De Defect. Orac. tom. ii. p. 414) Suidas, (tom. i. ad voc. εγγαστριμυθος, p. 667.) and Josephus, (Antiq l, xiv. p. 354) that those who were anciently called *ventriloquists* had afterwards the name of *pythonesses:* which implies a pretence to divination. *Python* is the word used by the Vulgate version, 1 Sam xxviii. 7, 8. And Mr. Voltaire (in his Philosophy of History, ch. xxxv.) says, "It is strange that the word *Python,* which is Greek, should be known to the Jews in the time of Saul. Many learned men have concluded from hence, that this history was not written till the Jews traded with the Greeks, after the time of Alexander." But in the original Hebrew no such word as *Python* is used, (as Mr. Voltaire himself knew,) but a term so remote in sound from it as *ob.* And for the credit of learning one would hope (what I really believe to be the case) that Voltaire is the only learned man, who ever undertook to determine the date of a Hebrew book from the use of a word in a Latin translation made many hundred years after it, and not to be found in the original. See Mr. Findlay's Vindication, p. 389.

ter of himself, would he have applied to a witch to raise up Samuel, and to extort from him the knowledge of futurity? or have expected God to answer him by a dead prophet, when he refused answering by the living; especially as he knew God had forbidden the consulting the dead? Saul came to the Pythoness *by night*: a season the most proper for carrying on a fraud; and for this reason always* chosen for magical practices. Those who supported any reputation in this profession, as the woman applied to by Saul seems to have done, were persons of great artifice, and of very extensive intelligence†, so as very seldom to be strangers to the character and situation of those who came to consult them. We are not therefore to be surprised at the sagacity and address of the witch at Endor. She either knew Saul by the advantage of his stature, or picked out the secret from his attendants, or inferred it from his giving her a promise not of *secrecy*, (all that a private person could give,) but of *impunity*‡, which Saul alone could make. When she pretended to have brought up Samuel, Saul was not allowed to see him§, but received his account of the apparition from the woman herself, whose great fright was a mere artifice‖. The question which is put into the mouth of Samuel,

* See either Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 8. or Le Clerc on ver. 13. or Dr. Chandler's Life of David, vol. i. p. 241, 273.

† Le Clerc on 1 Sam. xxviii. 16.

‡ Ver. 10. § Ver. 13, 14.

‖ *It may* however be objected, that if the woman had a mind to *make Saul* believe she had raised Samuel, why should she *pretend* to

Samuel, *Why hast thou disquieted* me, to bring me up?* by acknowledging the efficacy of magic, and the power of this pythoness to disturb his rest, and to bring him into this world at her pleasure, even against his own consent, and therefore without a commission from God, is highly absurd in itself, and injurious to the character of this divine prophet. And though he is afterwards made to read Saul a very grave lecture, and to denounce his doom; yet she ran no risk by so bold an admonition and prediction; an oath in those days being esteemed so sacred, that persons readily ventured their lives upon its credit.

With regard to her prediction concerning the death of Saul and his sons, and the defeat of his army *on the morrow;* it has been affirmed by some, that it was not punctually accomplished; there being (in their opinion) more than a day from the time of its delivery to Saul's engaging the Philistines. And if by *to-morrow*† the pythoness meant *the time to come;* the

be frighted at the sight of him? at the sight of the person whom Saul desired, and she undertook to raise? I allow, she did not really expect to raise Samuel: nevertheless, as she gave Saul this expectation, why did she counterfeit surprise at (what it became her to appear to expect) the success of her own art? To me it seems most probable that her surprise was not feigned, but real; and as such the historian represents it.

*This is somewhat like the complaint of Atossa in the Persæ of Æschylus, ver. 688.

†The original word, מָחָר *machar*, signifies *the next day*, in the following passages, Exod. xvi. 23. ch. xxxii. 5. 1 Sam. ix. 16. ch. xix. 4. 1 Kings xix. 2. ch. xx. 6. 2 Kings vii. 1, 18. ch. x. 6. It means *the time to come*, indefinitely, in Gen. xxx. 33. Exod. xiii. 14. Deut.

the prophecy was vague and indeterminate, and justly liable to the suspicion of imposture. She knew the situation of public affairs, and that the armies of the Philistines and Israelites were ready to engage; she clearly inferred the issue, from the superior numbers of the enemy, from the despondency of Saul, and his rejection by God, and from the appointment of David to succeed him*. It seemed most probable to her, that Saul and his sons would not stain their characters by cowardice, and save their lives by a shameful flight. She might be disappointed; but she knew how to recover her credit in case she lost any, by imputing her deception to the omission of some necessary ceremony and incantation. By the event it appeared that she was uncommonly fortunate in her conjectures. And the sacred historian saw fit to record this very remarkable case, partly to shew how deservedly Saul was rejected by God, and partly to guard the Israelites from giving too easy credit to the prophecies of Pagan diviners. This opinion, however, like the immediately foregoing one, contradicts the sacred historian, who not only represents the pythoness as affirming, but himself af-

Deut. vi. 20. Josh. xxii. 24, 27, 28. compare Matt. vi 34. The occasion therefore on which this word is used must determine the meaning of it. And on this occasion it must mean *the next day*, or *very shortly*; otherwise Samuel only affirms that Saul and his sons would *in some future time* be numbered amongst the dead. Compare 1 Sam. xi. 9, 10. And if the prophecy was not accomplished in this sense, it was not delivered by the real Samuel, but one who personated him.

* 1 Sam. xv. 28. ch. xxiv. 21. ch. xxvi. 25.

firms,

firms*, that *she saw Samuel,* and that *Samuel spoke to Saul;* nor has he dropped the least hint, that it was not the real Samuel of whom he was speaking. I add therefore,

IV. That there is an opinion concerning this matter different from the foregoing: and it is this, that the appearance of Samuel to Saul was a divine miracle; (though whether the miracle consisted in raising Samuel, or in presenting an image or representation of him before Saul, it is not necessary to determine.) It seems to have been the opinion of the antient Jews†, that Samuel now appeared to Saul. And if this was the real case; the apparition must be ascribed, not to the power of inchantment, but to the immediate appointment of God‡, as a rebuke and punishment to Saul.

In

* *And the woman saw Samuel,* 1 Sam. xxviii. 12. *Samuel said to Saul,* ver. 15. *Then said Samuel,* ver. 16. Perhaps it may be objected, that the historian does not himself affirm that the woman saw Samuel, and designed only to relate the account given by her, though he himself believed it to be false. But in this case, ought he not to have said, the woman *pretended* to see Samuel? and that the *pretended* Samuel spoke to Saul?

† The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, ch. xlvi. 20, says, *After his death Samuel prophesied, and shewed the king his end.* And the LXX, after relating the death of Saul for consulting the witch, add, *and the prophet Samuel answered him,* 1 Chron. x. 13. Josephus likewise was in the same sentiment, Antiq. l. vi. c. xiv. sect. 2.

‡ This opinion is maintained by Dr. Waterland, in his Sermons, vol. ii. p. 267, and defended by Dr. Delany in his Life of David. The succeeding writer of the same life, the learned Dr. Chandler, has combated this opinion, and given new strength to those objections which had been raised against it. I have attempted to answer or obviate these objections, except such as do not affect the Scripture

history

In support of this opinion, it may be observed, that Saul came to the woman by night, when she did not expect him, and was unprepared; and yet no sooner had she obtained from him a promise of safety, and learnt who the person was he wanted her to raise, than Samuel appeared; before she had any time for juggle or artifice, or for the performance of the necessary sacrifices and incantations. *Saul said, Bring me up Samuel. And the woman saw Samuel, and cried**. The historian here affirms *that the woman saw Samuel,* not that she *pretended* to see him, much less that she *raised* him. And the language plainly implies that she saw him *immediately*† after Saul's

history of this matter; for the doctor lays a stress on such, and particularly on Samuel's concealing himself *in a dark underground magic chamber of a witch. But* (as the doctor observes on another occasion) *this is not the history, but an addition to it.*

* 1 Sam. xxviii. 11, 12.

† This is an important circumstance. It is generally supposed that some space of time intervened between the request of Saul and the appearance of Samuel, so as to leave room for the use of magical rites; and that it was in the use of these rites that Samuel was raised. The English translation favours this supposition, and Dr. Chandler all along argues upon it. And it is acknowledged that he very successfully shews that it is very improbable, either that the witch should raise up Samuel by the power of magic, or that God himself should raise him up in her use of the magic art, especially as Samuel did not expressly inform Saul that his appearing to him was not owing to her, but God. But this reasoning proceeds on a supposition wholly groundless; it does not appear that any magical rites were used, or that a moment's time intervened between Saul's request and Samuel's appearance. The English translators have inserted the particle *when,* (*And when the woman saw Samuel*) without any authority from the original, and merely to favour their own prejudices.

request.

request. At this sight, the text says, *she cried with a loud voice,* in the utmost surprise and terror*, having no expectation of seeing Samuel, and having no pretence for ascribing his appearance to her own art, which she had not so much as exerted. This (as a justly celebrated critic† observes) "seems to be a plain evidence that her *art* was a cheat; and that the reality, (which he calls *a likeness of Samuel,*) unexpected to *her,* was God's own extraordinary interposition." The sorceress believing that Samuel could be sent to no less a person than Saul; from the appearance of the former, she concluded the latter was now present in disguise: which naturally made her very uneasy; as Saul had formerly cut off all those of her profession, and would now, she feared, be excited by Samuel to renew his former severity‡. The king bad her not be afraid, and asked what she saw. It must be acknowledged that this question is a proof that Saul did not himself see Samuel at first; but it seems pretty evident from the history, that he saw him afterwards. To Saul's question the woman replied, *I saw gods* §, or *a god,* a person of a majestic form, or one in the habit of a judge or magistrate ‖, *ascending out*

* See above, p. 308, note ‖.

† Dr. Clarke, vol. ii. p. 361, folio.

‡ "But why should the witch be frightened, if she had not used her magic arts?" She had acknowledged herself to be one that had a familiar spirit, and at Saul's desire had actually engaged to raise up Samuel. And it is in this sense she says, she had *obeyed Saul, and put her life in his hand,* 1 Sam. xxviii. 21.

§ 1 Sam. xxviii. 13.

‖ That the word *elohim* is applied to judges and magistrates cannot

be

out of the earth. The dead were thought to speak out of the earth*, but Samuel *ascended* and stood upon its surface in full view. Saul farther inquired, *What form is he of?* The woman replied, *An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle.* What witches undertook to raise was the ghosts of the dead; but the present appearance did not resemble a mere ghost or shadow, and agrees best with the supposition of its being Samuel himself, or a miraculous representation of his person and habit. It is observable, that Samuel was now covered with *a mantle*, the very habit in which he was clad when he denounced† that sentence upon Saul which he came now to confirm. While the woman was giving Saul this description of the apparition, Samuel seems to have advanced forward within his sight. For it is added, *And Saul perceived that it was Samuel himself*‡, not merely from the description given of him

be denied. See Exod. xxii. 8, 9, 28. Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6. Le Clerc and Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 13. Dr. Chandler (in his Life of David, p. 239.) objects to the application of this plural term to a single person; yet this term is applied to Moses, Exod. vii. 1, as was observed above, p. 211. And it is certain that Saul did not understand the witch as speaking of more than one person, for he asks, *What is his form?* And she explains her own meaning in the answer she returns to this question, *An old man ariseth.*

* Is. xxix. 4. ch. viii. 19.

† 1 Sam. xv. 27.

‡ The English translators, in order to favour the vulgar superstition concerning the power of witches to raise *ghosts* and *spectres*, have in this passage sunk the word *himself*; which seems to have been inserted in the original, on purpose to distinguish this appearance or representation of Samuel from his ghost or shadow, over which alone *the pythoness* pretended to have any power.

by

by the woman, and from the circumstance of his appearing without her intervention, but by the evidence of his own senses: otherwise, why are we told that *he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself?* Is not this equivalent to telling us he saw Samuel*? Besides, the conversation between Saul and Samuel is itself a strong presumption that they were now in the presence of each other.

This conversation was carried on in the absence of the pythoness, who withdrew from a presence she so little expected: for after the departure of Samuel *the woman came to Saul*†. The behaviour of Samuel agrees well with the supposition of there being, pursuant to a divine command, either a real appearance or miraculous representation of this prophet of God. He begins with a severe reproof of Saul, "Why hast thou *provoked*‡ me, to make (occasion) me to rise up?"

* When David bowed to Jonathan, 1 Sam. xx. 41, and the man from Saul's camp bowed to David, 2 Sam. i. 2; is it not hereby implied that each saw the person who spoke to him? and yet this is not asserted in the text. Now, if it be allowed that Saul saw the person who spoke to him, it will be impossible to deny the reality of Samuel's appearance, or of some miraculous representation of him: so well known was he to Saul by his voice, lineaments, and stature.

† 1 Sam. xxviii. 21.

‡ This is the true rendering of the original word, which is derived from רגז. A very learned critic (Dr. Chandler, in his Life of David, p. 249.) is mistaken in asserting that "it never denotes *to provoke*, but to move and disturb *by violence*." It is used to describe any violent commotion or concussion, (Job ix. 6. ch. xxxvii. 2. Is. v. 25. Amos viii. 8. Hab. iii. 7.) and hence is applied to the violent agitation of any passion, and of *anger* in particular. In Prov. xxix. 9. it

up?" Here his rising up is not ascribed to the pythoness, or to her magic art; nor strictly and properly to Saul, (it being customary with the Hebrews to express the *intention* by the *effect**;) but to the prophet's *indignation* conceived against the king on account of his inquiring what to do, in a way so expressly forbidden by God; to the impossibility (as it were) of God's passing over so great an offence in silence. Accordingly Saul's answer is manifestly an apology, and shews that he understood the prophet as reproving him. *I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams: therefore have I called thee*†, *that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do*‡.

Samuel, in his reply, first of all exposes the absurdity of Saul's conduct in applying to him, when he found himself abandoned by God; then explains to him the true grounds of his desertion, and of the present distressed situation of his affairs; and lastly,

it is rendered *to rage;* in Ezek. xvi. 43, *to fret,* (where the context requires a much stronger word, *to provoke even to fury*;) in Is. xxviii. 21, *to be wroth;* in Job xii. 6, *to provoke.* See likewise Hab. iii. 2. Is. xxxvii. 28, 29. Job xxxix. 24, where the noun derived from this verb is translated *rage.* It cannot therefore be inferred from the use of this word, that Samuel was *forcibly compelled* to appear on this occasion."

* See above, ch. iv. sect. i. p. 289, note ‖.

† This language of Saul does not imply that he had *invoked* Samuel; it expresses only his *design* in applying to the witch.

‡ 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

denounces

denounces farther judgments against him, as a punishment of the guilt he was at that very time contracting. *Wherefore then dost thou ask* (direction and assistance) *of me, seeing Jehovah is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy,* or *is with thine enemy*? And Jehovah hath done* (or *will do*) *to him,* (viz. Saul's rival or enemy) *as he spake by me:* that is, "prone as you were to doubt of the truth of those threatenings which God uttered against you by my mouth, they are now ready to be accomplished:" *for Jehovah has rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even David: because thou obeyedst not the voice of Jehovah, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore has Jehovah done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover, Jehovah will also deliver Israel, with thee, into the hands of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me,* (in the state of death, or of separate spirits †.) *Jehovah shall also deliver the host of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.* Is this the language of an artful impostor, whose business it was to flatter and delude the king, to sooth his distress, and gain his

* Thus the last clause of the 16th verse may be rendered; and the meaning is, as Vatablus observes, Jehovah favours thine enemy. This gives an easy sense to the first clause of the 17th verse, *And Jehovah has done* (or *will do*) *to him,* viz. to thine enemy, &c.

† Probably this is all Samuel meant by telling Saul *he should be with him.* So that there is here no necessary reference to the antient opinion of the Pagans, that the shades dwelt together according to their tribes and families, Homer. Odyss. A; nor any assurance given him of happiness in a future state, though some who suffer the judgments of God in this world are objects of his forgiveness in the next, 1 Cor. xi. 32.

favour,

favour, and thereby procure from him a larger gratuity? Or if, from a regard to the credit of her art, she did not choose to raise his hopes, why did she strive to provoke his resentment by the freedom of her reproofs, and the denunciation of the most dreadful judgments? There is a *keenness* and *asperity* in this answer, absolutely inconsistent with the least regard to her own interest or safety, and not to be accounted for on the supposition of its proceeding from a person of art and address under the circumstances of this sorceress. Indeed the very soul of Samuel seems to breathe in these expressions of displeasure against the disobedience and wickedness of Saul.

But it is objected, "that this could not be the language of the real Samuel, because he has not expressed any disapprobation of Saul for having recourse to the arts of divination, which were so offensive to God: and that it was unworthy of God to raise up Samuel from the dead, only to confirm a former sentence against Saul, which was declared irrevocable." The former sentence against Saul did not affect his life, but his crown only; nor was the time fixed for the execution of this sentence. Saul was spared, and even permitted to reign over Israel, till the commission of this new crime of consulting the witch; which the author of the book of Chronicles assigns particularly as the ground of his death, though not exclusively of his former disobedience: *So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar*

spiri

*spirit, to inquire of it**. And it is evident from the language of Samuel, that besides confirming the former sentence, he denounced new and most terrible judgments against Saul, and against his family and forces; and for no other reason that appears, but the crime he was at this time committing. It is farther objected, "that Samuel dexterously avoided an answer to Saul's principal inquiry," and that his language "has all the air of evasion and artifice†." Saul wanted to be informed by Samuel, how he was to act in his present critical situation, or how he might extricate himself from the danger which then threatened him. And Samuel, instead of having recourse to any evasion or artifice *to extricate himself from the* (pretended) *difficulty and necessity of giving Saul the advice he wanted*, gave him plainly to understand that it was too late to apply for any such advice as he asked; his doom being already sealed, and his sentence on the point of being carried into execution.

Though Samuel's prophecy is called by some an easy conjecture, yet it seems to argue a foresight more than human. Samuel distinctly foretold the following remarkable particulars: first of all, the death of Saul. And was it certain that Saul would not shun an engagement, when he was so dejected, and had been in so remarkable a manner forewarned of his danger? and that he would even rush on his own destruction? Secondly, Samuel farther foretold the death of Saul's *sons*. And who but God could

* 1 Chron. x. 13.

† Dr. Chandler's Life of David, vol. i. p. 251, 252.

certainly

certainly foresee that Saul's three sons, who endeavoured to save themselves by flight, should nevertheless perish by the sword of the enemy? Thirdly, Samuel foretold; that together with Saul God would deliver Israel, the army and people of Israel, into the power of their enemies, and that their camp should be taken; which made it the more difficult for them to bring a new army into the field, and exposed their country to the inroads of the Philistines*. Lastly, the exact time is determined when these events were to happen; which was the very next day. Accordingly, within this space of time the several parts of this prediction received a punctual accomplishment. The prophecy therefore seems to argue an unerring and divine prescience†.

* The last clause of the 19th verse is not, what it is commonly made to be, a bare repetition of the first clause. By *Israel* in the first clause we are to understand the army (including the people) of Israel, (compare ver. 4. and ch. xxxi. 1;) and by the *host* of Israel in the last clause, is meant more especially their *camp*; the loss of which preventing them from bringing a new army into the field, *the Philistines came and dwelt in* several of *the cities* which belonged to the Israelites, 1 Sam. xxxi. 7.

† Those, instead of falsifying, do really confirm the truth of this prediction, who object, "that Saul hardly returned to his camp early enough in the morning after he had consulted the witch, or in sufficient spirits to prepare for the battle that day, which therefore must have been fought the day after." For what would be with us the *second* day after the night in which Saul consulted the witch, was the morrow or *next* day with the Jews, who reckoned from sun-set to sun-set; and consequently included what we should call the next day, in the natural day on which he was at Endor. Nay, if the prophecy was not delivered till after midnight, *we* should not understand by to-morrow, any part of the day which was begun.

But

But here it may be asked, "Is it likely that God should refuse to answer Saul, when he consulted him in ways appointed by himself, and yet should answer him in a forbidden way; and hereby favour and encourage necromantic divinations, when he had expressly ordered those who practised them to be punished with death?" Saul, having been rejected by God for his stubborn disobedience to the divine orders, had no right to ask or expect his *direction* and *preservation* in his present danger; nor could God have granted it, consistently with his design of preparing the way for the advancement of David to the throne of Israel. For this reason God did not answer him in ways of his own appointment. Nor did he afterwards answer him in a forbidden way; but (if the explication here given of this history be just) interposed previously to the use of magic rites, and on purpose to reprove Saul for having recourse to them, and to pronounce upon him the sentence of death for this very crime, at the instant he was committing it; and thus to testify the divine displeasure against it. How this could encourage the use of necromancy, or indeed how God could more effectually discourage that most detestable art, I am not able to conceive. The method of God's proceeding on this occasion seems very conformable to what he had been pleased to do before in other cases of a like nature. When the king of Moab had recourse to sorceries, God himself interposed, and so overruled the mind of Balaam that he was compelled to bless those whom Balak wanted him to

curse*. And when king Ahaziah sent to consult Baal-zebub about his recovery, God by his prophet Elijah stopped his messengers, reproved their master, and denounced his death†. And why might not God in like manner interpose in the case of Saul, in order to disappoint his hopes of divine protection, and to denounce his doom; the foreknowledge of which had so great an effect upon him, that he instantly fell down into a swoon, and could no longer bear up against the bitter agonies of his mind? What is there in this conduct, inconsistent with the justice or sanctity of the great Governor of the world? Could Saul complain of being sentenced to die for having recourse to those impious arts, the exercise of which he himself had heretofore punished with death? How proper was it that his death should *appear* to be the punishment of his guilt! His death, if it had not been foretold, would have been considered as a common event, rather than as the execution of the divine displeasure. He had certainly disregarded the threatenings of God to depose him, and to appoint David in his stead; and very probably he had taken occasion, from his suspending their execution, to turn them into ridicule. Finding that he continued in the full possession of his kingdom many years after Samuel had foretold it should be taken from him, he might ascribe the prediction to the disaffection and enmity of the prophet, and his attachment to David. To clear the character of Samuel from all suspicion, and vindicate the credit of his predictions; to evidence the divine designa-

* Numb. xxiii. † 2 Kings i. 2—4.

tion

tion of David to the throne of Israel; and in the most affecting manner to display the righteous vengeance of God against the practice of necromantic divinations, by which Saul had now filled up the measure of his guilt; seems to have been the design of God in this miraculous appearance of his prophet.

I have now laid before the reader what occurred to me upon this difficult subject; and supported in the strongest manner I was able, from the reasonings of others, and my own reflections, the two different explications of it which carry with them the greatest appearance of probability. I pretend not to decide which explication is true. Neither of them countenances the opinion that miracles are performed by evil spirits; which is all I contend for. That which was proposed last seems to me to be best supported; though on this, as on every other point, I leave every one to form his own judgment.

The case of the devil's appearing to our Saviour in the wilderness, and transporting or accompanying him from one place to another, and shewing him all the kingdoms of the world, would naturally fall next under our consideration. But if the explication I have elsewhere given of this history be just, it is no exception to the principle we have hitherto been endeavouring to establish. In confirmation of that explication, I would observe, that if it be true that the Scripture appropriates all miracles to God, then the common interpretation of our Saviour's temptations, which ascribes so many miracles to the devil, must be false.

We

We have now examined the sense of revelation concerning the author of miracles; produced many arguments to shew that the Scriptures represent them as works peculiar to God, and attempted to solve the several objections against this account. The number and eminence of those Christian writers who have taught that the Scriptures allow to evil spirits a miraculous power, and the use made of that doctrine by unbelievers in sapping the foundation of the Jewish and Christian revelations, together with the nature and importance of the subject itself, will excuse the compass with which it has been treated. I will add, that deists should not avail themselves of the errors of Christians, which are arguments only against the persons who advance them, not against their religion. And even for them much allowance will be made, by those who consider that the opinion entertained at present concerning the miraculous power of evil spirits prevailed very generally amongst the antient Heathens and Jews; was early engrafted into the Scriptures themselves by false translations of them; and during the triumph of popery was deemed an essential article of the Christian faith. For how many ages were men prevented by their prejudices from understanding the volume of nature, as well as that of revelation! At the revival of learning, and the glorious æra of the Reformation, when men began to recover the use of their understandings, and to apply the true rules of criticism to the study of the Scriptures; they at the same time began to call in question the empire of *Satan* over the natural world. Luther abolished the

practice

practice of exorcisms, and many others no longer gave credit to idle stories of fascinations and magic. Much was then done to clear revelation from various corruptions which had been introduced into it. *And much* (says one of the most capable judges* of the subject) *still remains to be done.* No empire so durable as that of error and prejudice over the human mind; and it may still require a length of ages totally to subvert it. In the mean time, no one can complain of the obscurity of the Scriptures in any necessary article of faith or practice.

* Dr. Lowth, bishop of Oxford, in his Sermon at the Visitation of the Bishop of Durham, p. 24.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

Shewing that Miracles, considered as divine Interpositions, are a certain Proof of the Divinity of the Mission and Doctrine of a Prophet. The Advantages and Necessity of this Proof in confirming and propagating a new Revelation. Miracles useful in reviving and establishing the Principles of Natural Religion.

HITHERTO we have been endeavouring to prove, that Miracles require an immediate act or order of God, and are his peculiar works. We are now to shew, what is a necessary consequence from this principle, that these works, when properly applied, are a divine testimony to the person on whose account they are wrought, and to that doctrine or message which he delivers in the name of God. It was for the sake of this important conclusion that we undertook to prove, in the preceding chapters, by arguments drawn both from reason and revelation, that miracles are divine interpositions.

Miracles may be performed by God without the intervention of men, and for other purposes besides that of attesting the mission of a prophet. Nor can they serve as testimonials to a prophet, but under such circumstances as point out a relation between those works and his mission. If it does not clearly appear that they are wrought at his instance, or in *his favour*, they will not be known to bear any more relation

relation to him than to any other person. Equally necessary is it that the prophet should expressly assert his mission from God, explain its purport, and allege his miracles in proof of it, that their true intention may neither be overlooked nor mistaken, as the miracle of St. Paul at Lystra was at first by the Lycaonians*, through their inattention to the doctrine which he preached. If miracles are not declared to be signs of a divine mission, they cannot be intended nor ought to be regarded as such. It seems likewise to be farther requisite, that the person who claims a divine commission, and appeals to miracles in proof of it, should explain this commission, and deliver his message when going to perform his miracles, or while he continues to perform them; that he may not apply them, nor be suspected of applying them, to a wrong purpose; and that the connection between them, and the point to be proved by them, may be the more readily discerned, and sensibly felt.

But miracles, if they argue a divine interposition, must be esteemed divine credentials under the following circumstances: when it clearly appears that they are wrought at the instance, or in favour, of a person who claims a mission from God, delivers a message in his name, and appeals to these works, before or during the time of their performance, in proof of the divinity of his mission and doctrine. The works having God for their author, must in this case be considered as a declaration of his will, as his

* Acts xiv. 11.

immediate

immediate answer to the appeal that had been made to him, as the signs or testimonies of his approbation of the person claiming a mission from him, and professing to reveal his will. In this method God may be said to seal his commission, and to testify his approbation of the purport of it; just as we testify our assent to what another speaks in our name, by some particular token, or make what is contained in a writing, though not drawn up by ourselves, our own act and deed, by setting our hand and seal to it. It is evident that miracles, in the case here supposed, prove the divinity of *the doctrine* as well as of the mission of the person employed in publishing it to the world; or God's approbation of him, both in asserting and executing his commission. It is scarce necessary to add, that if divine interpositions in favour of a person claiming a commission from God prove the *divinity* of his doctrine, they likewise prove its *truth**. For it is impossible, as all men will allow, that God should affix his seal to a lie†; or bear an immediate testimony in favour of one who either falsely claims a divine commission, or is unfaithful in the execution of it. God is too wise to be

* To the prophet who had raised up her son to life the woman of Sarepta said, *Now by this I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord by thy mouth is truth*, 1 Kings xvii. 24. This is the language of nature and common sense.

† Κομιδη αρα ὁ Θεος ἁπλουν και αληθες, εν τε εργω και εν λογω. Και ουτε αυτος μεθισταται, ουτε αλλους ἐξαπατα, ουτε κατα φαντασιας, ουτε κατα λογους, ουτε κατα σημειων πομπας, ουθ' ὑπαρ ουδ' ὀναρ. Plat. Republ. l. ii. *p.* 431, ed. Ficini.

deceived.

deceived himself, too just and too good to deceive his creatures.

This is the manner in which miracles, supposing them to be divine interpositions, furnish out a conclusive proof of the truth and divine original of a supernatural revelation. Before we proceed to consider the advantages of this proof, it will be necessary to take notice of the different manner in which the argument is stated by other writers.

1. By the adversaries of revelation it has been asserted "that miracles, of themselves, are proofs only of *power*, without having any relation to the *doctrine* of the performer." Nay, the advocates of revelation*, though they think "that miracles directly prove the *commission* of the person who does them to proceed from him by whose power alone they could be performed;" yet maintain "that miracles cannot prove *the truth* of any doctrine," and that "there is *no connection* between any miracles and doctrines." If miracles, in themselves, prove only the interposition of some superior being, it must be difficult, we allow, to discern any connection between these works and the truth of doctrines. But it has been shewn that these works are proofs of a *divine* power and interposition; and therefore, under proper circumstances, divine testimonials to a prophet; testimonials to his doctrine as well as to his mission. If he declares himself to be sent from God to deliver a message in his name, or to teach a new doctrine, and

* See Bp. Sherlock's Discourses, vol. i. p. 289, 290; and vol. iii. p. 10.

performs

performs and appeals to miracles in proof both of his mission and doctrine, will not the miracles (supposing them to be divine works) equally prove the divinity of both? Indeed, his doctrine is included in his commission, and what God principally intended to attest. And if the miracles prove the *divinity* of his doctrine, they must prove its *truth*; unless proving it to be from God be no proof that it is true. According to this state of the case, there is a very strict connexion between miracles and the truth of doctrines*. Agreeably hereto we find that the prophets of God, both under the Old Testament and the New, at the same time that they asserted their divine mission, explained the particular object of it, or the purpose for which they were sent; and that they urged their miracles as immediate divine testimonies to their message or doctrine†, as well as to their mission. Nor can we have any higher evidence of the truth and certainty of any doctrine than the immediate attestation of God to it.——If some have contracted the use of miracles within too narrow limits; others, running into the opposite extreme, have stretched it too far. For,

2. Miracles have been urged to prove the universal

* It might have been added, that miracles may be of such a nature as to *exemplify*, as well as to *attest*, the doctrine of a prophet. But this connexion between doctrines, and such miracles as are proper samples of those doctrines, could not be taken notice of here; as we are now considering miracles only in their most general view, as divine interpositions.

† John xiv. 10, 11. Mark xvi. 20. Acts xiv. 3. See above, *ch. iii. sect.* vi. p. 245—6.

and

and perpetual inspiration of the persons who performed them. By some learned writers it has been asserted *, that *we may be rationally assured that a prophet is sent of God, BEFORE we have heard one word of his doctrine;* and supposed †, that all the miracles of a prophet may be performed first, and his doctrine be delivered afterwards. In proof of this point, they appeal first to the miracles of Moses in Egypt, and at the Red Sea; which, they allege, proved Moses to be *an oracle*, and would have proved the divinity of all the doctrines and precepts he afterwards delivered, even if Moses had performed no other miracles ‡. Whereas the ends proposed, or the doctrines to be proved by the miracles of Moses in Egypt, were distinctly stated *before* § the works were performed. Those ends were, not the proving Moses to be an oracle or a divine lawgiver to the Israelites, but the effecting their deliverance out of Egypt, the exemplary punishment of oppression and idolatry, and the manifestation of the true God to the world ‖. Nor was it upon this evidence, but upon the evidence of the miracles wrought afterwards in the wilderness, that the Israelites received Moses as a divine lawgiver, whose authority God continued to support by a series

* By Mr. Hallet on Miracles, p. 57, 61, 63; and Dr. Benson, in his Life of Christ, ch. vi. sect. 6. p. 224.

† Dr. Benson, p. 225, 226, &c. ‡ Page 229.

§ *Aaron spake all the words which Jehovah had spoken unto Moses, and* (then) *did the signs in the sight of the people.* Exod. iv. 29, 30. In like manner Moses and Aaron delivered their message to Pharaoh, before they proved their mission by miracles, Exod. v. 1.

‖ See above, ch. iii. sect. v.

of miracles, even after all his doctrines and precepts were delivered. The learned writers * next appeal to the miracles wrought by St. Paul at Philippi; though we read of his *preaching* † there some considerable time, before we have any account of his working miracles. These ingenious gentlemen all along argue on the supposition that the miracles of a prophet are a general assurance that we may safely trust him as an oracle ‡, and depend upon all he says as long as he lives §: a supposition altogether groundless, and of a like nature with that on which the unhappy man seems to have proceeded, who was slain by a lion for giving too hasty credit to a prophet ‖.

Hardly any thing has done more prejudice to revelation, than the misapplication of its miracles to purposes they were never intended to answer. What has furnished infidelity with more objections ⸸, and occasioned so much perplexity to sincere Christians, as

* Dr. Benson, p. 230. Mr. Hallet, p. 63.

† Acts xvi. 14—18. ‡ Mr. Hallet, p. 41, &c.

§ Dr. Benson, p. 224, 236. ‖ 1 Kings xiii.

⸸ Mr. Voltaire, in his Treatise on Toleration, says "that Jeptha's declaration, (Judges xi. 24.) who was inspired by God, is at least an evident proof that God permitted the worship of Chemosh." But this writer misrepresents the meaning of Jeptha, who is only arguing with idolaters upon their own principle, that all nations had a right to keep what their gods had enabled them to possess: which is very different from allowing the divinity and worship of Chemosh. Nor was Jeptha inspired when he spoke the words here referred to. *The Spirit of the LORD came upon him* afterwards, (Judges xi. 29.) inciting him to undertake, and enabling him to accomplish, the deliverance of the Israelites. Can it be *inferred* from hence, that whenever he spoke it was by divine inspiration?

man's

men's maintaining that a prophet who has once performed miracles is thereby rendered for ever incapable of error and vice*; and their building articles of faith on his private opinions with respect to subjects not included in his commission, and with regard to which he might think and speak like all other men?

All the prophets of God did not perform their miracles with one view, nor were their commissions of the same extent. The commission of some was limited to one particular purpose or season; that of others was more general and lasting. Each clearly stated the distinct and special purposes of his own mission and miracles; and *always* declared what those purposes were, *before* he performed his miracles, or (which is the same thing) before he ceased to perform miracles. And the miracles were designed to attest his commission, and the purposes of it, in their just extent, as explained by the prophet himself, during the time that the miraculous testimony was borne to him. On this plan, no inconvenience could possibly ensue from the errors of a prophet, on subjects foreign

* An opinion repugnant to the express declarations of revelation, Matt. vii. 22, 23. Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. See also Acts xxiii. 5. ch. xv. 12, 39. Gal. ii. 11, 14. When our Saviour says, Mark ix. 39. *No man who shall do a miracle in my name, can lightly* (ταχυ, *quickly*) *speak evil of me*; he means, that it ought not to be supposed, concerning any person who had so great faith in him as to undertake and perform miracles in a dependence upon his divine power, that he was at that time disposed to revile and blaspheme him. This faith however did not always govern men's lives. For to some, *who did many wonderful works in the name of Christ, he will say, I never knew* (or *approved*) *you*. The eleven apostles, while their minds were darkened by many prejudices, and even Judas, wrought miracles.

from his commission; nor even from his acting afterwards contrary to his own convictions, with respect to the subject of his commission; or on any other occasion. The evidence of Christ's divine authority, arising from miracles performed by those who afterwards revolted from the faith or practice of Christianity, was not impaired by that revolt. Nor did the culpable timidity of Peter, in withdrawing himself from the society of the Gentile Christians that he might not give offence to the Jews, weaken those proofs of the exemption of the former from the obligation of circumcision, which arose from the special miracles by which it was confirmed, in the case of Cornelius and other uncircumcised Gentiles. In a word, miracles must not be extended beyond their proper use, or applied to any other purposes than what the nature of the works themselves, or the declarations of the performer, will warrant. Miracles are the testimony of God himself to a person professing to deliver a message from him; a proof of the divine original of his mission and doctrine. But we are to receive as divine, upon this evidence, no other doctrines than those it was designed to confirm.

Having attempted to shew under what circumstances miracles considered as divine interpositions are a certain proof of doctrines, I proceed to point out the advantages of this proof, particularly in introducing and establishing a revelation from God. We shall still argue on the supposition of miracles being divine works; though, after what has been urged above, it may be unnecessary at every turn to shew

that

that the argument concludes only on this supposition.

I. The proof from miracles of the divine commission and doctrine of a prophet is in itself decisive and *absolute*. What reasoning can be more conclusive than this, "He that does such works as no man can do, unless God be with him, must be sent of God, and faithfully publish his will to the world?" The God of truth cannot bear an immediate testimony to any one as a divine messenger, whom he has not sent, or who publishes his own inventions as the oracles of heaven. No man was ever so absurd as to maintain that attestations properly divine can deceive us, or that God would immediately interpose in support of false claims. And this proof of a divine commission from the credentials we are now speaking of is full and sufficient, without taking into consideration the doctrine they attest. The proof arises out of the nature of the miracles, independent of every thing else. This fully vindicates the conduct of the prophets of God, who, as was shewn above *, demanded the immediate assent and regard of mankind to their divine commission, upon the sole evidence of their miracles, and prior to all reasonings concerning the natural propriety and fitness of their doctrine. It was only by such works as were sure tokens of a divine mission, that it was possible for them to overcome the objections and corrupt prejudices of mankind against their message. Had Moses

* Ch. iii. sect. vi.

told

told Pharaoh, or Christ the Jews*, "that before the evidence of miracles was admitted as a proof of a divine commission, the *matter* of that commission must be examined by men's natural notions, and be made appear to be conformable to them;" the miracles of these divine prophets would have produced only endless debates, instead of conviction. But the evidence of their missions from these works was in itself (as it was necessary it should be) decisive and absolute.

To what is here advanced some may object, "that if doctrines are to be received as coming from God, upon the bare attestation of miracles, without regard to the nature of the doctrines themselves; we may then be obliged, under the sanction of these works, to receive the most absurd and immoral doctrines, and there can be no possible guard against imposture." This objection supposes that doctrines immoral and absurd may receive the sanction of miracles: a supposition which ought not to be made; because miracles are works peculiar to God, and it is impossible for God to lie. The principle on which we here argue, that miracles are immediately to be referred to God, is so far from leaving us open to delusion and imposture, that it contains our greatest security from it; it furnishes us with all the evidence we can derive from the wisdom, veracity and perfect rectitude of the divine Being, that the attestation of miracles cannot accompany any false doctrines. It has never

* See p. 254.

been

been shewn, that such doctrines ever have received * the attestation of miracles: and inasmuch as miracles are works appropriate to God, it is impossible that such doctrines ever should receive this attestation. Whenever therefore the miracle is *apparent*, (there being either ocular demonstration, or other certain evidence of its truth;) it is not necessary to inquire, whether the doctrine be such as *may* come from God, or *may* be true: for the miracle (being divine) does alone assure us, previous to such inquiry, that it *did* come from God, and therefore that it *is* true; nay, that it is as impossible it should be false, or immoral, or absurd, as it is that God should act contrary to his own perfections. If the miracle be of *dubious* evidence, and the doctrine such as could not proceed from God; the proper inference will be, not that the miracle was performed by wicked spirits, but that it was invented by wicked men. The consideration of the doctrine may serve, in this case, to detect the falsehood of miracles; but is never necessary to establish the divinity of these works, or the truth and divinity of the doctrine itself which they are wrought to confirm: the latter must be true and divine, because the former can have no other author but God. The objection therefore puts a case which can never possibly happen; it supposes that God may publish and attest a falsehood to the world.

II. The proof of a divine mission and doctrine from miracles is the most *natural*, and *agreeable to the common sense of mankind* in all ages. The works

* See above, ch. ii. sect. ii.

of creation are standing evidences of the existence and attributes of God. The continued order of the universe is a sure demonstration of his constant providence. It is upon the theatre of nature that God is continually manifesting himself to mankind. Here, therefore, it is most natural to suppose he will display his power, and signify his pleasure, should he see fit to make any new discoveries of his will. If he would evidence to his creatures the interposition of the Lord of nature, in what other method can this be so suitably done as by controlling the laws of nature? And when he does this in answer to an immediate appeal to him, made by one who claims a mission from him, does he not declare in the most proper and expressive language, that it is his will that that claim should be received and admitted? This appears to have been the general sense of mankind, in all ages, concerning genuine miracles; as we have had occasion to shew*.

The natural sense of mankind, with regard to this as well as other subjects, may, no doubt, be in some measure perverted by sophistry and superstition. And it has been by some affirmed, that in the age in which the Gospel was published, both Jews and Gentiles entertained a very *low opinion* of miracles in general. From hence others have been forward to conclude, that they were not a very proper means of recommending the Gospel to the regard of mankind. It is not true, however, that genuine and incontesta-

* Ch. ii. sect. v.

ble

ble miracles were held in disesteem at the commencement of the Christian æra. The Jews indeed objected to Christ, that he dispossessed dæmoniacs by the assistance of the prince of dæmons; but it has been shewn* that they did not, and could not, pass the like judgment on his other miraculous works. Their own religion being grounded upon miracles, they were not so absurd as to deny their being proper proofs of a divine mission. Miracles were not only an evidence by which they were determined, but which they preferred to any other: *The Jews require a sign* †.

With respect to the Greeks or Gentiles, the learned amongst them, it is acknowledged, *sought after wisdom*, were captivated with curious speculations set off with the charms of eloquence, and may in some sense be said to have held miracles in contempt ‡; that is, *such* events as were by them commonly described by this term. These were of two sorts. Some of them, though esteemed miracles by the vulgar, were not really such, but mere natural events; inundations, prodigies, monsters, together with all the feats of sorcery and magic: and these might very rea-

* Ch. iii. sect. vi. p. 249. Mr Biscoe, after others, asserts that both Jews and Heathens ascribed the miracles both of Christ and his apostles to the power of magic. Sermons at Boyle's Lecture, p. 293. But his authorities will not support his assertion in this large extent.

† 1 Cor. i. 22.

‡ Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thessala rides? Hor.

sonably be rejected by all who were acquainted with the powers of nature* and art. Others were events truly supernatural; but they were considered as gross impostures. They were not only so ill attested, but so incredible in themselves, so destitute of all rational intention and wise contrivance, so visibly calculated to serve some political purpose, so trifling, or ludicrous, or absurd in their own nature; that it cannot be matter of wonder that the wiser Heathens rejected them with disdain. Marcus Antoninus in particular despised all the stories of them, under the notion of their being mere fables. His words are, *I have learnt not to believe those things which are reported concerning wonder-workers, or jugglers and magicians, in relation to their charms, and expulsion of dæmons, and the like*†. The followers of Epicurus were under a necessity of rejecting every history of miracles; because they denied a providence, and thought the gods did not interest themselves in the affairs of mankind ‡. But this very reasoning shews that they considered

* Vid. Tacit. Hist. l. i. c. 86. and l. ii. c. 1.

† Marc. Anton. l. i. § 6. Plutarch likewise (de Superstit. p. 171.) ranks γοητειαι and μαγειαι amongst the most ridiculous parts of Pagan superstition. Θαυματα μωρων might well grow into a proverb with respect to such miracles; which were fit only to produce the scorn and aversion which Horace expresses:

Aut in avem Progne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.
De Art. Poet. lin. 187.

‡ .....Credat Judæus Apella,
Non ego; namque deos didici securum agere ævum.
Horat. Sat. lib. i. Sat. v. lin. 100.

miracles as divine operations, and therefore were not disposed to deride the works themselves, had they been convinced that any such works had been truly performed.

The proof of revelation, therefore, from real and unsuspected miracles was not improper to be proposed to the Heathen world: for it is one thing to suspect or deny the *truth* of miracles; and quite another, when we allow their truth, to dispute their authority *. How well this evidence was adapted to the state of the Heathens, appears from its great success in converting them from atheism and idolatry to the Christian faith. And this success would have been still greater, had there been no more objection to the *doctrine* than there was to the *miracles* of Christianity: for these works immediately disgraced all the artifices of imposture †, and bore upon themselves such characters of divinity, that the Heathens regarded the performers of them as *gods*, and were with difficulty restrained from paying them divine honours ‡. From what has been advanced under this head, it in some measure appears that,

* It may here be objected, that those Heathens who believed a providence ascribed miracles to dæmons. But it will not follow from hence, that they believed that dæmons wrought miracles in opposition to heaven, and in confirmation of falsehood: παντα αρα αψευδες το δαιμονιον και το θειον. Plat. de Repub. l. ii. p. 431, ed. Ficini. Should any ask, How came it to pass that the Heathens did not pay more regard to the miracles of Christianity? I would refer them for satisfaction to Dr. Law's *Considerations*, &c. p. 121, note e, 3d edit. who treats this subject with his usual candour and judgment.

† See Acts viii. 9—24. ch. xiii. 8—11. ch. xix. 19.

‡ Acts xiv. 11—13.

III. Miracles form the most *easy* and *compendious* proof of a new revelation; such as lies level to the capacities of all mankind, even of those who have little leisure or ability for deep researches after truth. That *the bulk of mankind* are not endowed with faculties to apprehend the force of long and intricate reasonings, and that the necessary duties of their station engross almost all their attention, are facts too plain to be disputed. And to those who are at all acquainted with the writings of *the learned*, it is as evident, that those abstract reasonings which are above the capacity of the vulgar are often unsatisfactory to persons of judgment; and may generally be opposed by arguments so probable, as to cause persons of the best abilities to doubt on which side truth is to be found. The speculations which have had the sanction of one age have been exploded in the next; nay, those which have reigned absolute over all the cultivated parts of the world, for many ages together, are now sunk into contempt. And the new opinions, which are substituted in the room of former exploded ones, may hereafter undergo the same fate with them. For there is very little certainty in any science, (except mathematical,) any farther than the reasoning is grounded upon *facts*. God therefore, intending the Christian revelation for the benefit of all, founded it upon an evidence adapted to the capacities of all; upon such *facts* as clearly demonstrated his own interposition and countenance; and exhibited to the very senses, as well as to the understandings of *mankind*, the doctrines they were designed to attest,

the

the miracles being specimens or samples of those doctrines. This testimony which God bore to his Son was equally fitted to convince the learned and illiterate; the force of it was easily and immediately apprehended by all who were willing to open their eyes, and see the light. Had it been necessary that mankind should have been made *philosophers*, before they became *Christians*, how small and how slow a progress would the Gospel have made! especially as it was to be published to those who had the greatest need of supernatural assistance, whose understandings had been debased by superstition and idolatry, and whose minds were inflamed by prejudices and bigotry, as well as undisciplined to thought and reflection, and employed about the cares of life. But the Gospel, by being accompanied with a proof of its divinity that was plain and easy, and carried instant conviction, did in a short time establish itself in every part of the earth. This divine light, like that of the sun, enlightens every man without any distinction, and in a moment darts its beams from one end of the world to the other.

IV. Miracles are a very *powerful* method of conviction, making a strong impression upon *the heart*, at the same time that they carry light to the understanding. Such sensible and unusual effects, pointing out the immediate hand of God in producing them, arrest the attention, rouse the mind from the supine state into which it was sunk, strike it with an awe of God, impress the conviction of his peculiar presence, and carry with them an obligation to re-

ceive

ceive and obey the truths which they confirm. They add weight and energy to those truths, whose importance thus interests heaven in their behalf. Every one who considers the wisdom and majesty of the divine being must be sensible that no trivial occasion, that nothing but the execution of some design of the highest importance, can induce him in any instance to suspend his own laws, and produce events quite out of the settled order of his government. I add, that miracles, when they are not related, but *seen*, and when they are performed in our presence in a manner worthy of the Divinity, make a very peculiar impression; they must strike the mind much more powerfully than any history (whatever credit we give it) can do. So that, in these circumstances, no man can resist their efficacy without contracting a peculiar guilt, and incurring a high degree of the divine displeasure; which was accordingly denounced, by Christ and his apostles, against such as withstood the conviction of those mighty works by which the Gospel was confirmed *.

V. Powerful as these means of conviction may be, they are *not violent and compulsive;* nor do they produce their full effect, in engaging men to receive and obey a new revelation, without the exercise of right dispositions of mind. Whatever some have suggested to the contrary, by miracles God appeals to our *reason*, to judge whether they are the operations of his power, and evidences of his will; and whether those

* John xv. 24. Matt. xi. 21. ch. xii. 31, 32. Heb. vi. 4, &c. *ch. x. 29.*

at

at whose instance they are performed are commissioned to deliver it. And when the understanding is convinced that the mission is divine, our compliance with the message is an act of the will. Miracles are the same method of address to mankind as the works of nature, considered as the effects of God's power, and the significations of his will, which neither produce a full conviction without some attention and reflection, nor obedience without a becoming reverence of God.

Miracles, it may be said, necessarily strike the mind with astonishment; but so likewise do the wonders of nature, while they are new: and this, in either case, (useful as it may prove to some,) is of little use to those who studiously divert their thoughts from the operations of the divine hand, and are only looking out for matter of cavil against them. Miracles are no remedy for obstinacy; nor can the brightest manifestations of the divinity open those eyes which are wilfully closed. Signs of an extraordinary divine interposition will attract the readiest regard from those who have cultivated right sentiments towards God, and are previously prepared to obey his will. So that the evidence of miracles is not unsuitable to the nature of religion, as a reasonable and voluntary service; nor to the nature of man, as a moral agent; and at the same time it is peculiarly adapted to gain those over to the faith of the Christian revelation, who are best disposed to comply with its design*.

VI. The

* This account of miracles is confirmed by the effects which those

VI. The *necessity* of miracles is no less evident than their propriety and advantage, in attesting a divine commission, and propagating a new revelation. For, how can God give any evidence of his will, but by the operations of his power, or the effects of his omniscience? By what but the outward and sensible displays of both, can he bear a public testimony to an extraordinary messenger from heaven? The general laws of nature and providence answer the end for which they are designed; but cannot serve the purpose of a peculiar attestation to a prophet of God. Nor can the excellent tendency of the doctrine, separately considered, prove that it came from God. Had Christianity been only a republication of the law of nature, or a revival of certain principles obscured by superstition, but demonstrable by reason, when awakened into exercise; even then miracles would have been *useful* to excite the attention of the world to those principles, and to give them new evidence and certainty; nay, *necessary*, though not to establish their *truth*, yet to prove a particular *divine commission* to revive the knowledge of them, and thereby to give the publishers of them the greater authority to reform the world, and procure them a more speedy success. But when a new religion is (like that of the Gospel) the free result of the divine wisdom for the salvation of sinful men, and contains brighter

of the Gospel produced. Some rejected this evidence; others were convinced, but not lastingly reformed by it, (Matt. vii. 22, 23.); on others it had a perfect and permanent influence—according to their *respective* dispositions.

displays of the divine philanthropy than natural reason is acquainted with; how can the divine original of such a new religion be established, if no supernatural testimony be borne to it by God?

The more immediate design of the miracles of the Gospel was to prove the divine commission of the first publishers of it, and to engage men to receive it as an immediate message from God. They were more especially intended to demonstrate Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, the divinely appointed prince and saviour: a claim that could not be supported but by the divine testimony of prophecies and miracles. Christ not only assumed the honour of a prophet of God, but a far superior dignity and authority to any of the prophets; he spoke of himself as the son of God, in a sense peculiar and transcendent; as one appointed to govern the church, and judge the world. Now, the more extraordinary his claims were, so much the more necessary was it to confirm them by adequate miracles. Had Christ reasoned like a philosopher, he might have been esteemed as such; but, without producing proper credentials of a divine mission* and authority, he could not have enforced his instructions upon the conscience, as the immediate dictates and oracles of the Divinity; nor have been received by the world under his proper character, as the Son of

* This argument might receive large illustration from the case of *Moses*, both as a divine ambassador to Pharaoh and a divine legislator to the Israelites. Even his main doctrine, viz. that the God of the Hebrews was the only true God, as well as his commission, could be established only by miracles.

God,

God, the Saviour, Sovereign, and Judge of mankind. Christ had suffered death as a malefactor. His apostles affirmed that God had raised him up again, advanced him to a state of the highest dignity and authority in his presence and kingdom, and invested him with power to bestow immortality upon his followers. But who ought or could give credit to their doctrine and testimony, if it had not been confirmed by God himself, on whose good pleasure alone the constitution of the Gospel was founded? It was impossible, by reason, to prove the antecedent propriety and necessity of such a constitution. If any thing can render the necessity of miracles to confirm and propagate the Gospel still more apparent, it is the consideration of the great corruption* of the world at the time of Christ's appearance in it, creating in men a disaffection to the purity of this new revelation; the disgrace and danger that attended the public profession of it; the violent prejudices entertained both by Jews and Gentiles against the doctrine of the cross; the Gospel's superseding the necessity of the Jewish revelation, and establishing itself upon the ruins of Pagan idolatry; and the consequent opposition it met with from all the powers of the world. These difficulties and obstructions could not have been surmounted, if the Gospel had not been supported and recommended

* See what was urged above, to shew the necessity of confirming the Gospel by miracles, and of considering these works as in themselves certain evidences of divine interposition, from the consideration of the strong prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles against the *claims* of Christ, and from the great corruption of the age in which *the Gospel* was published, ch. iii. sect. vi.

by

by the most unquestionable operations of God's power, and the plainest testimonies of his approbation.

VII. Miracles, while they are more immediately and directly employed in introducing and establishing a new revelation, may serve to revive and confirm the principles of natural religion, and to recover men from those two opposite extremes of atheism and idolatry. Into the one or other of these extremes the world was very generally fallen in the age of the Gospel. Persons in the higher ranks of life were infected with atheism; those in the lower were quite over-run with idolatry. Now no properer cure of both these evils could be prescribed than miracles.

1. These works confute the pretences of *atheism*, and afford new evidence of those first principles of all religion, the being and providence of God. It has, indeed, been often affirmed, that miracles offered in support of a mission from God do only suppose, and cannot demonstrate, his existence. Nevertheless, if they are his immediate acts, and prove a divine mission, they must prove that there is a God from whom the missionary comes, and by whose authority he acts. Supernatural signs and wonders demonstrate his existence, in the same way of reasoning as the works of nature do. In both cases we proceed on one common principle, that every effect must have some cause; and argue from the visible effects to an invisible cause by which they were produced. If you consider only the grandeur of the works, the existence of the world (so replete with wonders!) bears a more ample testimony to the being of a God, than

all

all the miracles of the Jewish and Christian dispensations. Nevertheless, *occasional* and *uncommon* operations of the divine power have this peculiar advantage to recommend them, that they strike our attention more forcibly than that settled course of things which falls under our constant observation.

Miracles not only contain a new demonstration of God's existence, but strengthen the proofs of it drawn from the frame of the world, and clear them from the two principal objections of atheism, viz. either that the world is eternal, or else owed its existence to the fortuitous concourse of atoms. Sometimes the atheist affirms that the world was never made at all, but has existed from eternity just as it is at present; and is subject to fate or necessity: and thus he endeavours to evade the argument drawn from nature, to prove the existence of its creator and lord. But the supernatural proof of this important point is not liable to the same objection, and is even serviceable in removing it. No one affirms that miracles existed from eternity; and if they are really effected, they must have a cause. If they are effected at the intercession of a prophet, and in attestation of his commission, they must have a voluntary designing cause; and cannot be aseribed either to necessity or fate. And inasmuch as they control or supersede the laws of nature; their efficient cause must be distinct from nature, and superior to it; and can be no other than the sovereign lord of nature, the same whom we call God. Not to add, that had the world been eternal, the course of nature would have continued the same with-

out

out any interruption. Nor can visible signs of an invisible power that commands nature, be any more reconciled with the formation of the world by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, than with the notion of its eternal necessary existence. In opposition to both these pleas, they prove the world to be the work of a free and almighty agent*. For who can control the settled course of nature, but that great Being that established it? If the world had no creator, it could have no lord. He alone who caused it to be what it is, could make what changes in it he pleased. The visible signs of God's power do so clearly demonstrate his existence, that the atheist denies there ever were any miracles, to avoid being compelled into the belief of a God.

Miracles also bear a noble testimony to divine providence. They are actual exercises of God's jurisdiction over the world, and therefore a proof of fact that he governs it, and interests himself in its affairs. Prophecies likewise are a farther illustration and evidence of this important truth. When they describe the most contingent events, the actions of free agents; comprehend the fates of various nations and persons; and reach through a great length of ages; they afford a most sensible proof of the universal and perpetual

* So that, whether the apostle considered *the declaration* of Moses, Gen. i. 1. as that of a prophet, or the *credentials* of his mission; he might say, *By faith we know that the worlds were framed by the word of God*, Heb. xi. 3. Faith supplies us with new evidence of this truth, without weakening that of reason. And Moses might clearly and certainly infer from his miracles, even without an immediate revelation, that *in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

super-

superintendency of an unerring providence. These miraculous effects of the divine power and knowledge are a very valuable *addition* to that evidence of God's existence and government which arises from the order of nature, and serve to vindicate and confirm it.

2. Miracles are a remedy against the evil of *idolatry*, as well as that of atheism. In the opinion of idolaters themselves, these works are a demonstration of a divine power*. And when they are performed in the name of Jehovah, under the character of the only living and true God, in direct opposition to all the claims of idolatry; they equally establish the divinity of Jehovah, and confute the pretensions of all his rivals and opposers. The truth of his claims necessarily infers the falsehood of theirs. Miracles, being in themselves exercises of God's sovereign dominion over the powers of nature, which were the principal gods of Paganism, and from whom the inferior deities were supposed to derive all their authority, overturn the very foundation of the Pagan idolatry, and bring men to the knowledge of the true God†. This

* Acts xiv. 11.

† 1 Thess. i. 9, 10. 1 Pet. i. 21. 1 Cor. xii. 2. Acts xiv. 15. Mr. Voltaire (in his Dictionnaire Philosophique, p. 268.) seems to approve of the philosopher, who said that the sight of miracles would convince him of the existence of two opposite principles, one of whom undoes what the other had been doing. This objection proceeds on the false supposition, that miracles contradict or defeat the intention of the laws of nature: whereas they only aim at an end which could not be answered by the regular operation of those laws; (as *was shewn* above, p. 21.) And it is evident that, when they are performed in the name of the true God, and in proof of his sole dominion

This argument might receive large illustration from the *peculiar nature* of the Scripture miracles, were this the proper place for entering on the examination of them. But we are here only shewing the use of miracles in general, in bearing testimony to the existence, unity, and providence of God; and considering these works in their most general view, as divine operations.

For this reason we forbear likewise to shew, that when miracles are in their own nature displays of the beneficence and rectitude of the divine Being, instances of his favour or displeasure, according to men's different characters; and are likewise subservient to a scheme calculated to recover men to piety and virtue; they are then a new confirmation of God's *moral* perfections and providence, such as may serve for the conviction of all who call them into question, and be of singular use to those who worship gods of the most flagitious characters, and do it by acts of wickedness suitable to their apprehended natures. This the antient Heathens did, who nevertheless were recovered, by such miracles as are here described, to the knowledge and adoration of the Holy One of Israel.

minion over nature, or (which is the same thing in effect) in proof of a mission from him, under the character of the sole author and sovereign of the world, and are not (as they never can be) controlled by opposite miracles; instead of establishing, they directly confute the doctrine of two or more rival deities. Accordingly the miracles of the Jewish and Christian revelations were the means of converting men from polytheism to the faith and worship of the true God. *By him* (Christ) *ye believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.* 1 Pet. i. 21.

The

The foregoing observations are, I hope, sufficient to shew, that how low an opinion soever those may entertain of miracles, who will not allow them to be the immediate operation of God; yet when considered in this their true light, their use, importance and necessity in introducing and establishing a new revelation, are clearly discerned; and that while they give authority to a prophet to reveal the divine will to mankind, they bear a striking testimony to the existence and providence of God, and are highly useful, if not necessary, for the conviction of mankind when sunk into atheism and idolatry. They have actually answered this end, when all the works of nature failed of their effect. I would only observe farther,

VIII. That the evidence of miracles (whether of power or knowledge) is the fittest to accompany a standing revelation; because it is not confined to one age or nation, but may be extended over the whole globe, and conveyed to the most distant generations. Miracles of *power* carry instant conviction, procure present credit to a prophet, and must make a very peculiar impression on the spectators. Nevertheless, their use is not confined to them; for they may be so credible in themselves, so strongly attested, so faithfully recorded, and so necessarily connected with other subsequent facts, not to be disputed, nor accounted for in a natural way, as to leave no room for those to doubt of their reality, who had not the advantage of seeing them performed. With respect to miracles of *knowledge;* they serve in some instances *for immediate* use, particularly the discoveries of distant

stant and hidden transactions, and of the secrets of the human heart. There are other instances of supernatural knowledge, the predictions of future events, which are designed to carry conviction in some distant period. The distances between the delivery of the prophecies and their accomplishment may be very different: some prophecies may receive a speedy completion; others may be gradually accomplishing through many succeeding ages, to the very end of time; and hereby furnish evidence to the world through all these different periods. Such prophecies are a *standing* and *perpetual* evidence of the mission of a prophet; always lying *open* to the view and examination of the world. They give credibility to the history of his other miracles, being themselves one species of miracles, such as necessarily argue a special divine interposition. And the evidence arising from them, instead of being diminished, will be increased by their distance from the time of their delivery, as the events foretold successively happen.

From the whole of what has been offered, in this and the several foregoing chapters, it appears, I hope, that it can be no objection against the Jewish and Christian revelations, that they rest upon the basis of miracles.

THE END.

REFERENCES

TO THE

SEVERAL PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

Explained or referred to in this Volume.

GENESIS.

Chap.	Page
i. 1	212, 351
— 3	212
— 17	147
ii. 1	212, 217
vi. 2	134, 143
— 4	143
xv. 7, 8	218
xvii. 11	187
xxii. 14	218
xxv. 25	169
xxvi. 24	218
xxviii. 12	92
—— 13	218
xxx. 33	309
xxxv. 2—4	158
xl. 8	264
xli. 8	266

EXODUS.

iii. 13, 14, 15	216
— 14, 15	219
— 15	226
iv. 1—5	282
— 1, 5, 8, 9	231
— 9	284
— 29	331
v. 1	331
vi. 3	218
— 7	219
vii. 1	211, 314
— 6, 10, 20—5	289
— 8	231
— 9	228, 269
— 11	265, 266, 301
— 11, 12, 22	288
— 11, 22	290
— 12	302
— 13, 22	300
— 15, 17	298
vii. 17	220, 283
— 20—5	295
viii. 1—4, 16, 18	298
— 1—8	296
— 7	288
— 7, 18	290
— 10, 22	220
— 16	298
— 18	289, 297
— 19	299
ix. 5, 6	289
— 11	308
— 14, 16	221
— 16	222
— 20, 21	223
— 23, 24	93, 49
x. 1, 2	220
xi. 7	220, 221
xii. 12	222
— 13	187
— 14	309
— 48	289
xiv. 4, 18	221
— 31	223
xv. 11	214, 220
xvi. 23	309
xix. 3—8	231
xxi. 6	212
xxii 5	309
— 18	177, 266
— 8, 9, 28	314
xxiv. 3	231
xxxiii. 5	309
xxxiv. 10	223

LEVITICUS.

iv.	169
xiii. 10, 25, 26, 30, 32	159
xvi	169
xvii. 7	259

Chap.	Page
xix. 4	149
— 26, 31	177
— 31	174
xx. 27	304
— 6, 7	174

NUMBERS.

xvi. 13, 28, 30	231
xxiii.	322
— 27	268
xxv. 1, 2, 3	126

DEUTERONOMY.

iv. 19	147, 213
— 28	150
— 35	220
— 38	210
— 39	211
v. 1, 2	220
— 26	125
vi. 20	310
vii. 5	220
ix. 14, 29	220
xiii. 1	195, 293
— 1—5	185
xiv. 4, 18, 25	220
xviii. 10	266
— 10, 11	177, 178, 304
— 10, 11, 14	179
— 11	174, 201
— 22	209
xxvi. 14	125
xxx. 17	125
xxxi. 16	102
xxxii. 17, 21	158
— 20	204
— 21	149
— 39	218

JOSHUA.

ii. 10, 11	223
iii. 7	232
— 10	125
iv. 14	232
— 23, 24	223
xxii. 24, 27, 28	310
xxiv. 2	158
— 14	159, 221

Chap.	P.
JUDGES.	
xi. 24	
— 24, 29	

I. SAMUEL.

ii. 6	
iii. 19, 20	
v. 3, 4	
viii. 5, 7	
ix. 16	
x. 1, 7	
xi. 9, 10	
xii. 16, 18	
— 16—19	
— 18	
— 21	
xv. 22, 23	
— 27	
— 28	
xvii. 26	
xix. 4	
xx. 41	
xxiv. 21	
xxvi. 25	
xxviii. 3, 7, 8, 9	
— 7, 8	
— 10, 13, 14, 16	
— 11, 12	
— 12	305,
— 12, 15, 16	
— 13, 21	313,
— 15	307,
— 21	
xxxi. 1, 7	

II. SAMUEL.

i. 2	
vii. 4	
— 22	
— 22, 24	
xii. 15	
xxiv. 15, 16	

I. KINGS.

viii. 27	
— 59, 60	
xiii.	
— 3	

	Page
13, 26	149
24	68, 328
	152
1, 24, 36—39	229
4	275
7	149
9	68
2	309
5	309
3, 28	223
3	210

II. KINGS.

—4	322
5—17	224
1, 18	309
12	266
	309
6, 7	94
17	178
4	125
4, 35	226
15, 19, 35	223
15	94
6	174, 178, 304
1. 24	174

I. CHRONICLES.

13	174, 311, 319
26	149
14, 15	94

II. CHRONICLES.

15	160
19	223
iii. 23	152
iiii. 6	171, 178, 266, 304

JOB.

11, 16	102
3, 13	102
6	315
8	215
6	316
4	149
21	102
vii. 2	315
viii. 11	37

Chap.	Page
xxxix. 19	174
— 24	316

PSALMS.

ii. 7, 12	258
— 10	236
v. 6	204
— 28	158
xviii. 9, 10	93
xxii. 27, 28	221
xxx. 9	102
xxxi. 6	149, 173
xxxiii. 6	212
— 6, 9	212
li. 10	100
lviii. 4, 5	201
lxv. 9	215
lxvi. 2	289
lxviii. 17	93
— 21	169
lxxi. 7	187
lxxii. 18	215
lxxvi. 5	102
lxxvii. 14	215
lxxviii. 48—9	93, 94
lxxxii. 1, 6	212, 214
lxxxiii. 18	223
lxxxvi. 10	215
lxxxviii. 10, 12	102
lxxxix. 37	214
xcv. 5	212
— 6	125
xcvi. 5	149
xcvii. 7	150
ciii. 20, 21	93
civ. 4	93
cvi. 28	125
— 37	125
— 36, 37, 38	158, 159
cvii. 29	215
cxv. 8	150
cxix. 90, 91	214
cxxxv. 15	150
— 18	150
cxxxvi. 4	215
cxxxix. 1—12	211
cxlvi. 8	215
cxlviii. 5	212
— 6	214
— 8	94

PROVERBS.

Chap. Page
iv. 3 . . . 238
xxix. 9 . . . 315

ECCLESIASTES.

vi. 10 . . . 102
ix. 5, 6 . . 102

ISAIAH.

ii. 6, 8 . . . 177
v. 25 . . . 315
vi. 1 . . . 93
vii. 14 . . . 189
viii. 18 . . . 187
— 18, 19 . . . 171
— 19 . 123, 125, 174, 302, 314
xii. 23 . . . 189
xiii. 21 . . . 169
xix. 1 . . . 222
— 3 . . . 306
— 21 . . . 221
xx. 3 . . . 187
xxviii. 91 . . . 316
xxix. 4 . 174, 302, 314
xxxiv. 14 . . 169
xxxvii. 28--9 . . 316
xl. 18 . . . 156
xli. 21—3 . . 75
— 21, 26 . . 224
— 23, 24 . . . 172
— 29 . . 149, 157
xlii. 5 . . 217, 218
— 8 . . 218, 278
xliii. 8 . . . 152
— 8, 9 . . 224
— 9 . . 215
— 9, 13 . . 224
— 10—13 . . 210
— 11, 13 . . 211
— 13 . . . 213
— 16 . . . 102
— 17 . . 150
xliv. 7 . . . 152
— 8 . . 210, 224
— 9 . . . 150
— 24 . . 213, 217, 278
— 25 . . . 173
xlv. 5 . . 149, 217, 218
— 5, 6, 18, 21, 22 . 210
— 7 . . 212, 213
— 16, 20 . . 152

Chap. P.
xlv. 18, 21, 22 . . .
— 21 . . .
xlvi. 5 . . .
— 9, 10 . . 215,
xlvii. 11, 13 . .
— 12, 13 . .
xlviii. 3 . . 162,
— 11 . . .
lxiii. 16 . .
lxv. 3 . . .
— 11 . . .

JEREMIAH.

ii. 27 . . .
v. 22 . . 37,
viii. 19 . . .
x. 2 . . .
— 2, 3, 8, 14 .
— 3 . . .
— 3, 5, 15 . .
— 5 . . .
— 5, 16 . . .
— 8 . . 149,
— 10 . . .
— 16 . . .
xiv. 14 . . 172,
— 22 . . 149,
xviii. 15 . . .
xxiii. 16 . . .
xxvii. 9 . . .
— 9, 10 . . 172,
xxviii. 9 . . .
xxxi. 35 . . 152,
— 35, 36 . . .
xxxii. 18, 19 . .
xxxiii. 25 . . .
xliii. 13 . . .
l. 36 . . .
li. 19 . . .

EZEKIEL.

xii. 6, 17 . .
— 6, 11 . . .
xiii. 2, 3 . . .
xvi. 43 . . .
xx. 7 . . 159,
— 12, 20 . . .
— 26, 31 . . .
xxi. 21 . . .
xxiii. 2, 3 . . 159,
xxiv. 24 . . .
— 24, 27 . . .
xxx. 13 . . .

DANIEL.

Chap.	Page
i. 4, 20	272
— 20	265
ii. 1—13	275
— 10, 27	264, 265
— 11	110
— 11, 27, 29, 47	224
— 28, 29, 47	215
iv. 7	152, 264
v. 4	23, 150
— 7	152
— 7, 9	272
— 11	273
— 11, 12	265
— 35	217
vi. 26	125
vii. 9	93
x. 13, 20	97
xii. 2	102
xiv.	105

AMOS.

viii. 8	315

JONAH.

ii. 8	173

MICAH.

Chap.	Page
i. 13	101
v. 12	177, 266

NAHUM.

iii. 1	177

HABAKKUK.

ii. 18	150
— 18, 19	150
iii. 2	316
— 7	315

ZECHARIAH.

xiii. 4	209

TOBIT.

iii. 8	65, 131
vi. 7	65
— 17	131
viii. 2	65

ECCLESIASTICUS.

xlvi. 20	311

MACCABEES.

ix. 61	101

MATTHEW.

Chap.	Page
iv. 24	181
— 23, 24	234
vi. 34	310
vii. 22	333
viii. 28	133
ix. 8	68, 241
— 32	248
— 33	252
— 34	131
x. 15	241
xi. 5	238, 246
— 12, 13	251
— 21	344
xii. 23	241
— 23, 28, 29, 30	253
— 22, 26, 27	248
— 27	252
— 28	237, 241
xii. 31, 32	344
xv. 30, 31	68
xvi. 1	242
— 16	238
xviii. 10	93
xxi. 23	251
xxii. 45	251
xxiv. 5	197
— 24	187, 197, 200
— 21	197
— 26	198
xxv. 24, 25	251
xxvi. 48	187
— 63	238

MARK.

i. 27, 28	252
ii. 10, 11	239
— 7	252
— 12	252

Chap.	Page
iii. 22	249
ix. 39	333
xiii. 6	197
— 22	193, 197
xvi. 20	240, 330

LUKE.

ii. 12	187
iii. 18, 21	246
iv. 1, 4	234
— 36, 37	252
vi. 18	233
vii. 21	238
viii. 11	246
— 31	96
ix. 2, 6	246
— 43	252
— 55	100
x. 17	253
xi. 14	249, 252
— 20	233, 237
xiii. 13, 17	68
— 16	65
xvi. 6	204
— 26, 31	103
xviii. 1, 7	251
xxi. 8	197
— 11, 25	187
xxii. 66, 70	238
xxiv. 19	241
— 21	197
xxvi. 37	104

JOHN.

i. 34, 41	238
— 51	92
ii. 11, 22, 23	241
— 18	242
— 22	240
iii. 2	68, 241
— 34	233
iv. 45, 52, 53	241
v. 19, 36	233
— 20, 21, 25, 29	239
— 27, 29	236
— 36, 37	234
vi. 14	241
— 27	240
— 30, 31, 41, 60, 66	254
— 39, 40, 44, 45	239
— 69	238
vii. 16, 17	233
— 31	241
viii. 18, 28, 29, 42, 54	234
— 26, 28, 38, 40	233
— 28, 29	238
ix. 3	233
— 14, 16	254
— 24	250
— 33, 35, 38	241
x. 1, 47, 48	250
— 24, 25, 36, 38	238
— 35, 36	234
— 37	233, 242
— 38	244
— 44	241
xi. 4, 25, 26	239
— 4, 40	233
— 15	240
— 41, 42	234
— 45, 47, 48	241
— 47, 48	69
xii. 11, 37	241
— 19	250
— 37, 38	233
— 44, 45	234
— 49, 50	233
xiii. 19	240
xiv. 9, 12	234
— 10, 11	238
— 10, 12	330
— 10, 24	233
— 26	243
— 29	240
xv. 22, 25	241
— 24	234, 344
— 26	242, 243, 244
— 27	243
xvi. 4, 30	240
— 8, 11, 14	244
— 12	255
xvii. 21, 23	244
— 18	243
xx. 21	243
— 31	240

ACTS.

i. 2	233
— 8	243, 244
ii. 4	102
— 19	187

	Page
	234, 235
, 23, 26	243
	245
3, 41—4	247
	247
	245
	68
4, 26, 31	250
, 33	245
	68
	236, 237
, 32	245
2	279
4	246
7	247
13	175
24	341
, 42	247
	234
, 37	246
, 41	243
, 43	236
19, 20	246
3	94
	246
3, 11	341
	248
	247
	252
	243
, 49	246
	246, 328
18	64
	68, 327
, 13	341
, 15	352
	27, 128, 162
35	246
, 39	333
4, 18	332
, 18	176
3, 11, 13	246
, 22	128
, 31	17
	130
	242
4, 11	246
9	341
5	333
	103

ROMANS.

Chap.	Page
i. 4	202, 242
iv. 11	187
v. 1, 5	247
viii. 14, 16, 23	247
— 15	100
xv. 16, 18, 19	247
— 19	242
xvi. 13	197

I. CORINTHIANS.

i. 5, 7	247
ii. 2	219
— 4, 5	246
iv. 9	202
— 19, 20	199, 246
v. 4	199
— 5	248
viii. 3	219
— 4	149, 150, 152
— 4, 5, 6	259
— 4, 6	162
— 5	161
x. 19	149, 150
— 19, 20, 21	261
— 20, 1	127, 131
xi. 32	317
xii. 2	150, 352
— 3	202
— 4, 11	242
— 7	248
— 12	200
xiv. 3, 22, 25, 31	248
— 25	240
xv. 12, 35	104
— 14, 15	243

II. CORINTHIANS.

i. 9	215
— 22	247
iv. 10, 11	246
v. 8	247
vi. 16	128
x. 6	248
xi. 13, 14	200
xii. 12	246
xiii. 3	246
— 8	199
— 10	248

GALATIANS.

Chap.	Page
ii. 11, 24	333
iii. 2, 5	200
iv. 6, 7	208

EPHESIANS.

i. 13, 14	247
— 19	242
ii. 2	95, 100, 204
iv. 4	244
— 8—16	248
— 24	204
— 30	247
vi. 12	95

COLOSSIANS.

i. 3	204
ii. 4, 8	202
— 12	242
iii. 12	197

I. THESSALONIANS.

i. 4	197
— 4, 5	247
— 5	246
— 9	128, 150, 225
— 9, 10	352

II. THESSALONIANS.

ii. 9, 10	203
iii. 17	187

I. TIMOTHY.

i. 20	248
ii. 5	259
iv. 1	236
— 1, 2, 3	106, 128

II. TIMOTHY.

i. 7	100
ii. 18	104
iii. 8	301
— 9	293, 302

TITUS.

Chap.	Page
iii. 6	243

HEBREWS.

i. 7, 14	93
ii. 3, 4	241, 242, 245
— 4	202
— 14	65
vi. 4, 6	333, 344
x. 29	344
xi. 3	351

JAMES.

ii. 14	131

I. PETER.

i. 21	225, 352-3
iii. 19	102

II. PETER.

ii. 4	95, 96
— 18	202

I. JOHN.

iv. 1	293
— 1, 2, 3	202

JUDE.

Ver. 6	95
— 19	202

REVELATIONS.

ii. 2	202
v. 13	93
vii. 11	93
ix. 20	105, 128
xii. 1, 2	207
xiii. 13, 14	206
xv. 1	207
xix. 10	93, 240

Printed by J. Taylor, Black-Horse-Court, Fleet-Street.

NOT TO BE REMOVED
FROM THE LIBRARY

3 2044 054 764 592